

## Demolition Lovers

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# Demolition Lovers

by [eddie\\_dxaz](#)

## Summary

“How cruel of the world to have this be their fate. However, he’d do it all over again just to get to know the complicated mess that was Simon Riley.

Hopefully Ghost feels the same.

With a loud growl of frustration, Ghost moves swiftly above him.“

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Soap is framed for a crime that he didn’t commit. Now a fugitive and officially an enemy of the military, he’s on the run desperately trying to survive. What happens when his best friend and former partner Simon “Ghost” Riley is sent to kill him but fails?

(Edit: changed the title to Demolition Lovers bc it fits the story so fuckin well. So that’s the title now :) Was “Vices Of Dead Men”)

## Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

## Run Boy, Run

They say when things seem to be going a bit too well, that's when you should start to worry. When it's too good to be true. And honestly? Things have been great. He's got a great team, a found family, a home away from home— all that jazz.

Since his time in Las Almas, he has spent extra time trying to built meaningful relationships within the 141 along with Alejandro and Rudy. If it hadn't been for them, who knows what he would've done. It was the first time he had ever experienced something like that and honestly it threw him for a loop.

But since most of that cleared up, it's been okay. Sure they're still on the hunt for Shepherd and Makarov but what else is new? Soap has always been an optimist compared to Ghost's pessimism. (Realism, the lieutenant would scoff). He always tells him, "Careful, sergeant. Don't get too close. Things are going a bit too well."

Soap wishes he would've listened.

"... Private intel to an unknown contact from you, John Mactavish. We went to the coordinates where the message had been sent from and we had found traces of your dna there along with some of your clothes and weapons. We also found some c4 and a marked location on a map. Would you like to explain yourself? Just what you were planning to do?" The captain questions.

It wasn't Price. Price had been away for a family emergency and this guy had come to take his place temporarily. He seemed nice enough so the rage on his face was foreign. Ghost and Soap had just been getting ready to head back to base after a mission when they had been stopped by Captain Jones.

"What?" Soap asks, stupidly, "I know nothing about that."

It was a vain attempt. Soap knew the moment that the man had shoved him away from the vehicles that he was fucked. Not because he did it. No, because he's only seen that look on one person's face before and it was Alejandro at Graves. It was the type of anger you only get after you found out someone you trusted just took that trust and shattered it in their hands.

Soap genuinely has no idea what the man was talking about. He

would never do anything like that. But the defense falls flat. And the man motions for the two soldiers to grab him. Ghost protests loudly for a moment, pushing one of the soldiers back from the sergeant. A warning was in his tone.

That's when he realized they weren't going to grab him. No, they had their knives drawn. They were planning on either torturing him or killing him and he had no interest in finding out which one. Blue eyes meet brown, a callback to Graves' betrayal. This time, he was the traitor. Well, the accused traitor. So, with an apologetic glance, he fled. Say what you want about an innocent man not running but that's such bullshit.

He hides out in the sewer system where he's sure he's safe, for once grateful about the mess that was Graves' and Shepherds little scheme. That time had prepared for this moment. One where he's in the dark with not one person he can trust as it would be too dangerous to do so. He wishes he could. He wants nothing more to.

He closes his eyes, the amused inflection in his ears. It takes place in his heart. Jokes about half a dog and loving Kentucky... He flutters his eyes open. Soap pulls the dog tags out from under his shirt, running his fingers along the embed lettering for a moment.

"What the fuck," He groans. John takes that moment to rip off his helmet, sliding down the walls of the tunnel. He grips at his mohawk way too tightly and he allows himself two minutes to internally freak out before he gets up again. He can't wait. He can't allow himself to live in the past.

*"Stay sharp, Johnny,"* A voice that's not his own snaps deep in his brain, *"If you don't, you die."*

He has to go.

---

Price physically falls into his chair the moment he's briefed on what happened a week ago now. His time with his family had been cut short by Kate telling him he needs to come back to base as soon as possible. She told him she tried to let him have his time but that she'd figured he'd want to know what was going on. Her tone had been deadly serious.

The shock rips through his whole body and he can't. That's all he keeps thinking. He can't. He can't believe that out of all people it

would be Soap that did this to him. To them. He can't deal with this. He can't. This hits way too close to home. It's blindsided him.

Everyone loved Soap. He was considered family. The man had allowed the younger one to get too close. He had let his guard down. A part of his brain was screaming that it couldn't be true and the captain wasn't sure if it was something he should listen to or denial.

"We have instructions to kill him," Laswell grimly states after giving him a moment.

Price stands up, enraging, "What?"

"He knows too much about Makarov and Shepard. The intel he had leaked... it's too risky to allow him to live," She explains, "The military sees him as a ticking bomb. You know they don't do that."

His hands slap the table, loud enough to cause her to jump. It's quiet as the news settles. It leaks into his veins and he wants to scream at the grief deep within him. The afternoon sky leaks into the room, shining an orange hue over his clenched fist.

*"You going to go see what's at the end of that, huh Mactavish?" The rookie asks, elbowing Soap, "Maybe a pot of gold?"*

*Soap glares at the sunrise. The light dusts across his features, making his already slightly tan skin a shining gold. "That's rainbows and I'm Scottish, you idiot. Not Irish," He scoffs at the rookie.*

"They want to send Ghost."

Price focuses back into reality at that moment. The grief turning into dismay. What the fuck were they thinking? Ghost? Really? Usually he could put all his bets into the lieutenant's ability to detach any emotion from a situation. But...

He thinks back to their lingering touches. The times Ghost had placed a protective hand over the small of Soap's back and how it had seemed so normal. To the sergeant leaning in close enough to make everyone in the room pay attention to the two as he mumbled out a flirty quip towards his higher up. No. The times that Price had asked, "Something there that I need to know about?"

It was all in good fun. He remembers the different reactions he'd receive after asking both of the men after the other had left. Soap

would turn red immediately at the assumption meanwhile Ghost would avoid his eyes, huffing out a breath.

“He can’t,” Price states.

“He’s the most qualified, captain.”

“No, he just can’t.”

“Captain—“

“Dammit Laswell, listen to me. He. Can’t. You don’t understand he doesn’t have the— Kate, please. Don’t do this to him. He won’t be able to. This is the one guy on earth that Simon Riley won’t be able to kill.”

The Major on call that’s been quiet until now, asks, “And why is that?”

“Just—“

Price likes to think he knows Ghost. After all, before the rest of the 141, he’d been the only one to see his face. But he knows for a fact that he knows Simon.

Simon loves too big. Too hard. Once a person digs past Ghost and gets to know Simon? That person will always be embedded into the lieutenant’s heart and something tells Price that Soap is closer to the man that’s supposed to be dead than he ever will be. If his suspicions are true, he can’t tell them. That puts Simon on their radar as a threat also. So he snaps his jaw shut.

“He is the only one who can do it. Everyone else gets attached. He doesn’t. We know that he can finish the job. We have faith in the Ghost,” The Major booms, “He does it tonight. We have John Mactavish’s location in file on your desk. In and out. Simple as that.”

The call ends and Price takes a moment. They hadn’t even called him Soap. It was John Mactavish this, John Mactavish that.

Once he makes it to the mess hall, he throws the file down onto the table without a word. The man sitting at said table alone stares at it. The ghost of a man’s loud laughter echos off the wall of the joint and he knows the both can hear it as they glare at the mission in front of them. Without even opening it, Ghost growls, “No.”

“I tried, Simon,” Price mumbles back, “I tried.”

Ghost curses the universe and its ability to constantly fuck with him. He knows what's in that file. Why wouldn't he be the one that's sent to kill the only person that he's let get this close to him? Why would he be allowed two fucking seconds to mourn? To feel the way his chest has a fist squeezing around his heart? That unrelenting weight is too much to bear as the file is pushed more towards him.

He opens it. A very, very low resolution photo of Johnny— Mactavish is clipped inside. He feels ill. Ghost could probably absolutely throw up the two bites of his dinner if he didn't swallow down the bile immediately. The grip on his heart tightens.

Opening this felt way too accepting. It was way too big of a confirmation to him that the sergeant was his enemy now. Not for the first time today he thinks about Las Almas and how once upon a time, this man had been the only one he trusted.

And Ghost wants nothing more than to nod his head curtly at his captain and reassure him that, yes, Soap would be dead before the sun even sets but he can't. He can't move. Yet somehow he gets on his gear. And somehow he finds himself sitting in the living room of the safe house Soap has been staying at the past week.

Fury rages inside of him. The mourning has now turned to anger and he wants nothing more than to hurt him. For him to feel the pain that Ghost feels. How could Soap do this? Ghost never wanted to bring any harm to him. But now look at where they are. For what reason? Did the little family they found in the 141 mean nothing? Did he mean nothing?

Did all those moments where they felt like they were all on the edge of something other than friendship mean anything? Was it one sided? Was it even real?

That's the worst part of all of this. Ghost can't tell. It feels as if he is missing a man that had never existed to begin with. Because if Soap really had betrayed them, then Simon didn't know him at all. The Johnny he knew would never have done this. But maybe there was no Johnny and there was no Soap. Maybe it's all been a lie.

And he can't breathe at that thought.

# Decode

When Soap steps into the apartment he can officially think two things. One, he's absolutely fucked. Two? This is an okay way to die.

Ghost sat on the couch, a knife twirling between his fingertips. The moonlight shone brightly behind him in the dark room, casting a shadow amongst the features of the infamous skull mask. The tags that were sitting on the outside of the gear rather than in gleamed brightly, as if to want to make their presence known. They mocked the two. Most people would've ran for the hills and never looked back. But not him.

The thing is; Soap knows he's here to kill him. The evidence against him, while not true, was too damning for them to even risk the idea that he could've been framed. It's not like it was just one thing. There were multiple pieces of evidence. Even though he's innocent, it's impossible to know for sure and that's just delicacies that they don't get in this life.

"So," Soap starts, "They sent you, huh Lt?"

Ghost doesn't respond. All he does is twirl the knife. It should be scary, being so close to his own death. But, it's not.

It may be pointless but if nothing, he can't have Simon thinking that he actually did this. It would be his biggest regret in life, letting this man think that their friendship or whatever it was between them meant nothing to him. Because it meant the world. And he would've never done this to him. He's spent so much time wondering how this even happened this past week. Who did this? And why him?

"Ghost—" He starts.

"Why did you do it, Mactavish?" The man interrupted, stilling the motion of the knife before stabbing it into the table next to him. He leans forwards, glancing towards where Johnny stood. His frame revealed nothing. No hurt. Almost as if this meant nothing.

And the use of Mactavish stabbed him. It took the breath out of his lung in the most painful way. That in itself was his death. He wasn't Johnny anymore and there's a good chance he never will be. Soap steps forwards, "I didn't do it. You have to believe me, Si."



He doesn't have to believe him. Ghost doesn't have to do anything. As of right now, the taller man owes Soap nothing. He is believed to be a traitor that lived amongst them only for information. "The ones closest to you can be the ones that hurt you the most," Is all Ghost says.

A knife flings in his direction, he dodges. Then suddenly hands are on him and he's thrown across the room. He didn't even register the lieutenant had gotten up until he's crashing into the wooden coffee table as it breaks underneath of him. He hears the footsteps nearing him. Soap manages to only push himself up off of the ground when a hand tangles into his hair and forces him to stand. He yelps out in pain.

"Eyes on target," Ghost states, most likely into the comms.

"Stop," Is all Soap says, "I didn't do it."

He registers the glint of steel just as he wrangles out of his former friend's grip. It must've been torn out of the wall as he hit the table. He lands in a kick square in the chest, causing him to go flying back into the said wall with a thud. It's at that moment, Soap can see it.

For so long, the only way that he's been able to get a feel for what Ghost was thinking were his eyes. The man wore that mask everywhere. Except sometimes, when it was just the two of them and he was feeling safe with Johnny so he'd take it off as he read the mission report he had just filled out. Soap would always take a mental screenshot, using the memory later to sketch the beauty of the man into his sketchbook. Afraid of what would happen if he forgot.

But before then, Simon's eyes had always given him away. They do now. Within them he saw the anger but even deeper he saw the pain. It caused him to still. It was so raw and he doesn't think he'd ever seen in another person's eyes like he did now. He wanted to do nothing but take it away.

Due to this distraction, he didn't register the man getting closer and swinging the knife. Well, not until the last second. The attempt to swerve away from the assault was sloppy and miscalculated. He flinches. White hot pain slashes through his face and he stumbles backwards, bringing a hand up to his left eye. He hisses as it burns.

Once he brings down his palm, he's alarmed to see the red liquid on it. Then Ghost lunges forwards, tackling him to the ground. On the way down Soap manages a few good punches into his side until he hits the hardwood floor with a grunt of pain.

The squabble on the ground for a few moments until Ghost brings his knees on either side of his lap, wrapping his ankles around his legs, pinning him successfully. Soap punches him in the face, hoping he'll relent enough for him to get away. He doesn't. Instead Ghost grabs him by the throat, squeezing slightly. The pair of dog tags hung from the man, dangling in the space between them. Admittedly, Johnny didn't think that this would've been how they ended up in this position but it's not a bad way to go out, he guesses.

It's not a bad way to go out.

By the hand of someone he trusts. Someone he loves. If it's not Ghost then it'll be someone else eventually. At least, Ghost will give him the mercy of making it quick rather than using this as a way to blow off some steam. No matter how mad he was at Johnny, he'd never force him to sit through a painful death. So he stops fighting.

"Okay," He flops his arms down, "Okay."

The grip on his throat loosens before it's gone completely. At that moment he thinks Simon looks beautiful, despite the situation they were in. Soap watches Simon glance at the knife in his hand and then back at the man underneath of him before gripping the handle tighter. He can see the hesitation. Can feel that Ghost doesn't want to do this but they both know that he has to. As tragic as it is, this is the end of them.

Soap reaches and places a gentle hand on the mask, right where his cheek would be without it. He remembers the scar there as he traces it with his thumb. Everywhere Simon had hit him burns and his face is bleeding but it's not like they were ever promised something like this wouldn't happen. And it's not like Soap would've just let the man kill him. He'd fight. He's never been the type to give up, until now. Because if Ghost is sent to kill you, you either die or you'll have to kill him to save yourself. Ghost doesn't leave loose ends.

Soap just hopes that the touch is confirmation to Simon that it was all real. It was never fake. Even if he never believes that Soap is innocent, he hopes to whatever God is up there that Simon knows that what they had, whatever it may have been, was real.

Simon leans into the touch. He knows. But he still has to finish this job and Soap won't kill Simon. He won't. So it'll have to be him instead. "I forgive you," He whispers between them, "I understand and I forgive you, Simon."

Soap feels a warm droplet fall onto his face, right in the new gash he's supporting. It burns slightly. If it hadn't come from upwards he would've assumed that it was his own blood. However, it wasn't. It was a tear. Simons eyes were welled up with them and they were dropping freely at this point. His breathing was uneven as sobs threatened to wrack through his body. His chest heaves with effort.

He raises the knife. It's a shaky movement, stark from the usual skilled effortlessness Soap has witnessed many other times in battle. The Scot drops his hand from where it rested. It hits the ground with a loud thump. Closing his eyes and turning his head away when he says again, "I forgive you."

Simon lets out a choked out sound. Soap can feel the way he's fighting to keep control over his emotions. How he struggles and how his whole body shakes with resistance. How cruel of the world to have this be their fate. However, he'd do it all over again just to get to know the complicated mess that was Simon Riley.

Hopefully Ghost feels the same.

With a loud growl of frustration, Ghost moves swiftly above him. But the pain never comes. He hears the air of the blade coming down but it never lands in his chest or his throat, instead the lieutenant grunts out in pain. Soap opens his eyes and quickly snaps his head over to see the knife sticking out of the other man's shoulder. Blood that's not his own drips onto his arm. Time is frozen in that moment as their eyes meet— Ghost's red with tears and Soap's wide with shock. Then, it all comes rushing back when Ghost rolls off him and mumbles, "Go."

The former sergeant sits up, blood rushing to his ears as Ghost huffs out in pain. His brain hasn't caught up with body quite yet as he stares at the blood pooling in his former teammates hand.

"Simon—"

"Go!" He yells.

And Soap couldn't believe it. He was being allowed to live, Ghost was giving him the opportunity to escape. He scrambles to his feet, backing up like a scared deer. "Thank you," he breathes.

"Don't," Ghost warns, "This was entirely selfish. Now, go."

He's freely sobbing and Soap wants nothing more than to reach out.

To let him know it's okay. But he can hear Price's faded voice through the comms slightly, asking for updates. They're out of time. So Soap is on the run again, blinking blood out of his eye and wondering what the hell Ghost meant by this being selfish.

Ghost watches him go, feeling weak. It's been a while since something like this. He's never hesitated, the humanity in him believed to be long gone. But Johnny has always been the one that brings him back to it. He wants to punch himself and part of him wishes he'd driven his blade into his own heart rather than the shoulder it was currently in. He presses the button on the radio after he's sure Soap is long gone and says, "Target got away."

It's a frustrating thing, being human. He's not too sure how he managed to turn it off before. All he knows is one day it just shut off and never came back. If you were to ask, it came back all at once when John Mactavish placed a gentle hand on his cheek as he was *about to be brutally murdered by him*. Realistically, it occurred way before that moment. It did have to do with Soap, though.

As soon as they're back on base, he's rushed to medical. Once the nurses are done fussing over him, he stares at the ceiling, tears pricking at his eyes again. "*I didn't do it*," rings in his ears. It's unrelenting. The phantom touch of a hand on his cheek burns through the mask.

*"I didn't do it."*

*"You have to believe me, Si."*

*"Stop. I didn't do it."*

*"I forgive you. I understand and I forgive you, Simon."*

He groans rubbing at his unmasked face in discontent. When did he take it off? He doesn't know but he had. The man heaves into a sitting up position, head bowing towards the floor. Light footsteps echo through the room. "Give us a moment," Price says.

The nurses hurry out of the room. It's silent between them for a second, neither really knowing how to start the conversation they need to have. "Ghost," The older man starts, "How did he get away?"

“Stabbed me. Wasn’t expecting it,” He breathes while zoning on the boots of his commanding officer and friend standing before him. Weak. Broken.

A loud sigh is let out over his head. “I need you to talk to me, kid. There’s a lot of questions being asked and I have to protect you—“

Simon looks up at the man then. The utterly destroyed mess that he knew he was, tear brimmed eyes, black makeup streaked, and ruffled up hair. Price’s gaze softens immediately and a common understanding clicks between them. Ghost failed. And he did it on purpose. A hand is on the back of his head, pulling him towards the older man’s chest. A loud, guttural sob rips through the air and it takes a moment for the lieutenant to realize it came from him. It didn’t stop after that.

Soldiers tell stories all the time. Ones of them visiting their loved ones, thinking they’re fine until they see their parents’ faces. The moment that they are wrapped into hugs, they break down. Simon thinks that’s what this is.

“I told them,” Price growls, “I knew it. You did the best you could, Simon. I’m sorry I failed you.”

It’s the protective words of a father figure. One where they knew they knew what was best but had their hands tied at that particular decision making moment. “He says he didn’t do it,” Simon tries.

*“I didn’t do it.”*

“We don’t know that, Simon.”

*“I understand”*

“I know.”

*“I forgive you, Simon.”*

Price pulls away as the younger man lifts his hands up, fiddling with the dog tags through his shirt. The ones that rested on his heart. He could feel the gaze go from pity to caution. Because the look in Simon’s eyes was so far away and distant, somewhere not even Price could reach him.

# Writings On The Wall

## Chapter Summary

Simon and Soap missing each other. That's it. That's the chapter.

Soap pays the man at the front desk in cash, keeping the hood on his head and his eyes down. After he gets the keys, he stumbles into the room, immediately making his way to the bathroom. He rips off the hood. His one eye is squeezed shut as he glances at the damage. A bruise is forming on his right cheek— the red bound to turn into a deep purple by tomorrow — his lip is split, and his hair is caked with blood. He feels around for any type of head injury and is relieved to find none.

So the blood must be from the worst of the injuries... He finally pays attention to the deep gash that starts in the middle of his forehead before it runs down through his eyebrow, the hair that was once there gone. Most likely forever if he's honest... It goes over his eyelid and all the way down to his cheek, in line with his left nostril.

Rinsing the blood from his eye he cups the right one, opening the left. He relaxes his shoulders at the discovery. His vision was fine. If it had been effected, that would've been okay if he had any way to access an eye doctor without putting him on the map. But he doesn't. Small victories, he guesses.

He cleans the wounds, clenching his teeth as he does so to the long cut. It's going to scar, that's for sure. It most likely needs stitches but the pharmacy nearby didn't have any needles so butterfly stitches will have to do for now. If Soap ever sees Ghost again, he owes him for this one. But maybe letting him live could suffice. Depends on what type of scar it will be and if it'll suit him, he thinks jokingly. Maybe it'll make him hot and mysterious.

He groans as he takes off his hoodie, sore muscles screaming in protest. The man flops onto the lumpy hotel mattress that reeks faintly of mildew and some other mystery smell. He closes his eyes.

---

Ghost didn't sleep. He can't. He sat in his bunk, eyes on the empty duffle bag in his room. His body aches and itches the longer he stares. If he waits until the sun is down tonight, he could probably sneak out

out of here easily. No one would realize he's gone until the morning.

What was he thinking? He frowns at his own thoughts. He is not going AWOL. There is no proof that Soap is innocent and the words of a man about to die can hardly be trusted. It could all be a game. A way to get into Ghost's head and seed doubts in his mind.

The door opens without warning. Gaz stands there. "Hey, man," He greets. Ghost grunts a response before the door clicks closed. The bed dips next to him, leaving the two men to sit in silence.

For a moment, the lieutenant wonders why the man is even here. They were close, sure. But not close enough to sit alone in the ambiance of a room together without saying anything. Then, he realizes. Soap.

Gaz and Soap have been friends since they both basically joined the military. There were times that they knew each other better than anyone else on base. Soap could always tell when Gaz was upset about something and used to try to rope Ghost into ways to make the man feel better. He would succeed in both regards.

A plastic bag is suddenly pressed into his glove covered hands. Ghost stares down at it. A sandwich was neatly place in them, peanut butter and jelly with extra jelly. Just how he likes. "You haven't eaten in a few days," Gaz starts, "Soap mentioned once that when you get like this, he makes you your favorite sandwich. Told me it needs extra jelly."

His heart aches. Ghost swallows, "Why did he tell you that?"

"Just in case he couldn't take care of your spooky ass anymore.' His words. Not mine."

"Thanks."

"Don't mention it."

They sit in the quiet a bit longer. It was actually somewhat comforting to have someone else here with him. Someone who cared about the annoying Scot just as much as he did. Not in the same way if he's honest (he chooses not to be) but just as much. He wonders if Gaz has contemplated sneaking out and joining Soap as well. Most likely not.

He pulls up the balaclava, unwrapping the sandwich, and taking a bite. It should be awkward but it wasn't. The man besides him squirms slightly and amusement curls into his chest at that. "Ask," Ghost

commands.

"Did he tell you why he did it? Before he, you know, stabbed you?" Gaz interrogates, "Because I just can't see Soap doing something like this for no reason. He wouldn't. I know he wouldn't."

The lieutenant apprised, "Careful what you say, sergeant. They'll assume that they'll have to keep an eye on you too."

"Too?"

Ghost hangs his head and takes another bite of the sandwich. For the first time in his military career, he had the higher ups attention and not in an impressed fashion. No, they were worried. When he had given in his mission report, Laswell immediately started digging through the story and asked him to retell it to her in words. It was her orders so Ghost couldn't fault her. But it was a sign that they were wary of him.

It's not like the man to fail a simple mission like this. Kill the target, get out. Like he's done millions of times before. They had chosen him due to his skill and the fact that he's known to be extremely cautious about trust. It could go either two ways at this point; they force him back out onto the field to get the job done right this time or they burst through those doors at any second and take him into custody. Both felt like a death sentence.

He can't kill Johnny. He won't kill Johnny. He remembers at that moment the touch of a gentle hand on his cheek. The way that the man's blue eyes glistened in the pale light, not a trace of fear to be found in them. He had looked at Ghost like he always had. Like he was something to be cherished.

Johnny was the best friend he's ever had. Sometimes, it had felt like they were a little more than that but Ghost is sure that was just hopeful thinking on his part. Realistically, there wasn't much to Ghost that could be considered desirable. So it was most likely just him reading into things the way he wanted to. Even if— No.

It doesn't even matter anymore. Because there's no telling if any of it was real to begin with. Soap betrayed them. He gave intel to an unknown contact and had explosives stocked away in a safe house. As off as it sounded, it's the truth. Still, when would Soap even have the time to do any of that? Every waking second was spent around Ghost practically. Their friends made jokes that they were connected at the hip.



He liked to pretend that it was all Soap. Soap was the one who followed him around but honestly at some point it had become the other way around. Ghost trailed behind the sergeant like an obedient dog. It was embarrassing at times because at one point Soap just sort of expected him to be behind him. He would turn and hand the taller man a chip from the bag he was eating from. He would lean back and make a comment about how clumsy a new recruits form looked as they threw a punch. It became a routine.

Ghost misses him. So much.

"Ghost?" Gaz says, following his gaze to the bag in the corner, "What are you planning, sir?"

There was a worried edge to his tone. Ghost tightened his jaw, unable to answer. What would he even say? That he wants to blindly believe Soap? That every bone in his body is screaming at him to run to him? To just have him back? Even though the evidence against him is pretty strong? It's ridiculous.

But couldn't he? No, he shouldn't. Ghost was at a crossroads and whichever path he chose would hurt someone. If he stays, he will have to hurt Soap physically. If he leaves? Everything that he's worked for is gone and the 141 would be devastated. Betrayed again. Either way, Ghost loses.

Why is he even thinking about this?

"I'm not planning anything, Gaz."

The response felt like a lie, even to his ears. Gaz bumps a shoulder against his, "I won't tell if you don't."

Ghost turned his head, eyes widened at the implication of what was being said. Was Gaz planning on turning his back on the military? The thought is cut short by the man continuing, "I don't believe Soap did this. Do you?"

He should lie. He really should. The higher ups were already hot on his trail, sticking their nose in every corner that they could find. But yet, "No."

Gaz let's out a breath, turning back to the duffle bag. He stands, clapping a hand on Ghost's shoulder with a tight squeeze. Then, he leaves. Ghost finishes the sandwich.

Memories of Soap continue on for the next couple of days. Every area is infected with his energy, although he's long gone. Ghost can't take it. Even his own room has little pieces of him littered in it and it physically destroys him. A shirt or two, a pair of old boots, and the sketchbook. He hasn't had the strength to look inside of it. It lays on the nightstand, collecting dust as if it's awaiting the owner to come back to it. To pick it up and run a pencil hastily against the pages. The artist would hum one of Ghost's rock songs as he drew. "Dad music, Lt."

The sun sets and it rises, just as it always had. The whole world seems to continue on but he feels left behind. Funny enough, like a ghost.

When the captain comes to find him, he pauses at the door. Ghost is still wearing the same clothes he had been when Gaz had come to talk to him two days ago. But instead of sitting, the man was now laying down. His brown eyes glared holes into the same duffel bag. It was daring him to grab it. To stuff it with clothes and find Soap. The only thing that was stopping him was the training he had gone through. It reminded him of the fact that Soap was the enemy. Or, supposed to be.

A hand hit his boot. He didn't move. "Come on, Ghost," Price utters, "Get up. You haven't left this room in three days."

Ghost doesn't speak. He can't. He wants Price to go away. He's weak right now. He's an injured animal. Sure, there's been times where they've seen each other like this before. It comes with the service. But this time it feels way too raw for anyone to witness.

"Ghost," Price begs. It's desperation. Believe it or not, it does pick at his heart painfully but he just can't move. Ghost wants to know when he became so numb. Not like how he was before meeting Soap. It's an agonizing type of numb.

"Simon," The older man asserts loudly, "Get the hell up!"

Simon feels too detached from his body at this point to even react to the yelling. All that comes is a slow blink in the older man's direction. The bags under his captain's eyes are dark, beyond visible at this point. They stick out like a red flashing alarm. He turns his eyes back to the bag.

Price collapses down on the floor next to the bed. Simon still wishes

he'd go away. He wishes the everyone would go away because then he wouldn't have to get close to people. Then they wouldn't hurt him.

He wouldn't end up soaking in two days worth of sweat underneath a skull mask that's meant to shield him from the rest of the world. It failed him. But more so, he failed himself. Hope was a stupid thing to have but Johnny made him a hopeful man and he hates him. He hates him for this.

He hates himself more. Mostly because he doesn't hate Johnny at all.

"They're trying to find him," Price says, "When they do..." The man doesn't finish the sentence yet it's ending lingers thickly in the air. They'll send someone to kill Johnny. Then, the 141 will be expected to move on and the Scot will be replaced as if he'd never existed at all. Simon pities the poor bloke that does take his spot. There's no promise he won't make that recruit's life a living hell.

But is the 141 even what it used to be anymore? A new person wouldn't fit because it'll never be the same. Every member was crucial to the flow. They survived unimaginable things together. That trust can't just build itself up over night. But then again, maybe that trust never meant anything at all.

He wants Soap back. He needs him back. Simon doesn't think that he'll ever get over this. Maybe he'll just have to find a way to kill Simon again. But could Ghost even survive this?

It was a question that was left unanswered as Price sat with him the rest of the night. Both men feeling like a failure for two separate reasons but caused by the same catastrophic event.

-

Soap tries not to let it all get to him. If he did, he's sure he'd break. He suddenly realized that he may officially remain alone for the rest of his life, as short as it may be. Attempting to clear his name was next to impossible. He doesn't have the resources to.

Plus, if he ends up walking into any shop, any building, that happens to have a camera? He's fucked. It'll alert the military of where he is. Granted, he hasn't gone too far but still.

It's not like Soap hasn't accepted death before. It was back when he has been underneath Simon Riley about three days ago now. But that was different. He thinks of how absolutely concerning it would be for

any therapist to hear that the only way he'll accept death fully is if Simon was the one to deliver it to him. It sounds ... strange. Maybe it is.

No. It is. There's no "maybe" to it.

But he loves that man. So much. He doesn't fear him. He knows that Simon was only hurting him back then because that's what he was ordered to do, otherwise they'd never dare hurt each other. Not purposely. But then again, he wasn't ordered to hurt him, he was ordered to kill.

There were multiple times during that fight when Ghost could've ended Soap. Easily. However, he threw him into a coffee table instead of hurling another knife right between his eyes. He had tackled him to the ground instead of stabbing him. He had let go of the grip on his throat instead of squeezing it until the lights went out.

He didn't do any of those things. Rather, Ghost stabbed himself and told Soap to run. Maybe hurting him physically was a procrastination to the actual thing he was sent there to do. The thing he failed to do.

He wishes this was a nightmare he could wake up from. Soap wants nothing more than to feel the heat of the man standing behind him or the quiet nights in the lieutenant's room. Those moments where it felt like the world around them just simply wasn't there. They were in their own little space where no one could touch them.

He wants to go home.

Not to the base. Not to Scotland. No, to the brown pools that lured him in the moment that he had locked into them. The man hadn't realized how dark the world seemed without this guy in it, looming over him in a way that caused everyone else to avoid the two.

Silence feels different when it's not coming from Simon. It's a weird thing. Soap didn't even know silence could hold several individual forms other than menacing, awkward, and peaceful. This felt... wrong.

Time moves slowly. It's boring but also terrifying. He knows that he's moving closer to the sweet embrace of death. Is he okay with this? Is he okay with Simon never knowing how he felt? It's in the sketchbook but that's probably long gone in some higher ups office right now as they tear through it in some attempt to find any sort of evidence.

He tells himself that if they ever meet again, he'll confess. But with

how cruel the world has been to them? He doubts they will.

# If I Killed Someone For You

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"No," Price slams his hands on the table, "No, no, no, no!"

"Captain you are being unprofessional," The major says through the screen.

"I don't care. He's not doing it. He's not even fully healed from his last run in with Mactavish. He got stabbed. Let him have time to rest."

The man barks, "No one is allowed rest until there is a bullet between Mactavish's pretty blue eyes, do I make myself clear?"

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The file is dropped on the table in front of him. It's almost comedic at this point. In fact. He sort of wants to laugh at the beige folder laying there, mocking his very existence and his failures to do as he was told. Simon wants to slaughter all of the people above him for torturing him with this. Including God himself.

Well, except for Price. He can live.

For the past week, Soap has haunted him. As if that day he had been able to drive the knife right into the man's chest. He sees him in everything he does. He feels their last touches on his skin. Gaz has tried to talk to him but Ghost has no interest. He itches too bad for something, he's just unsure what. That's a lie. It's such a lie but he can't allow himself to indulge in the truth.

At least he's finally left his room. Though, now he wishes he hadn't.

Price stares at him. All pity. Usually Simon hates that look. He'd tell him to stick it where the sun doesn't shine and get lost. But he revels in it now. He should feel pity. Because the universe has decided it wants to Be Simon Riley's worst enemy and he's losing the battle.

His eyes were sunken in, bags underneath of them darker then the face paint at this point. Sleeping was worse than usual. His dreams consist of Johnny smiling at him in the radiant way that he does before taking a knife out of nowhere and stabbing him directly in his

heart. It's incredibly cheesy. Corny, even. He almost misses the nightmares. Almost.

Because at least with these dreams he can see Soap's face. He closes the file with a slam.

—

Later on, the wind rips through the night, causing a chill deep in his bones. His spot where he's positioned on the roof made it ten times worse. Not that it mattered much anyways. He's not going to be the one that pulls the trigger tonight. He refuses.

"Eyes on target. Ghost, do you copy?" The backup sniper, a newer recruit that goes by the callsign "Bat" says. Don't ask why. He doesn't know or care to know.

At that moment, Soap appears in his scope. The man glances at the window nervously before shaking his head at himself. He has a new gash on his face, cutting through his eyebrow. It's held together with butterfly stitches and Ghost fears for a moment that he had taken Soap's sight from him with that one swift cut. He shakes the thought away.

He tries to refocus but he can't find the ability to, no matter how many times he breathes out in an attempt to detach. Each time he's reminded that this is so much more than a mission. This was Johnny. Ghost's hands tremble. He wants to blame it on the bad shoulder. Yet — *"I didn't do it."* —Rings in his ear. He groans outwardly.

"Lieutenant?" The comm vibrates. He rips it out, untangling the wires from his chest.

"Fuck this," Ghost grumbles. One by one he strips the gear off, as quickly and efficiently as possible. Then, he turns the sniper rifle to his own current teammate on a different roof, shooting him in the least lethal spot possible. The body of the man tumbled backwards. He stands, ripping the mask off in the process. At the end of all of this, he's left with only the skull balaclava, a jacket, and his knives. Then there's—

His fingers grip at the tags on his neck for a moment. He tugs them off, staring at the lettering on it. 'John "Soap" Mactavish. Task Force 141' embedded deep within the circular metal. He smirks.

*They were in the privacy of Ghost's room. He was going over a mission report while Johnny sketched absentmindedly from where he sat on the bed. Every once in a while the man would glance up at him, at his maskless face, and then nod before getting back to work. It was the only time Ghost ever allowed himself to feel peace.*

*"Lt?" Soap suddenly says into the stillness. Ghost hums, not looking up from the report. He hears Johnny sit up, the book closing with a clap.*

*"Will you miss me when I die?"*

*Ghost sputters at that moment, tearing his gaze from the papers and staring at the man with wide eyes. When. Not if. When. And he decided he didn't like that wording one bit, "Don't jinx yourself, Johnny. Say if. Not when,"*

*"Okay, if," he corrects with an eye roll, "If I die."*

*"Good man."*

*He turns to fully face him, taking in the man for a moment. The once short mohawk starting to be a bit overgrown, the bright blue eyes bearing into him— They see every part of him. Every flaw. It should send him running but it doesn't.*

*He frowns, "You're not going to die, because you have something to live for. So, I don't have to worry about missing you, now do I?"*

*The stillness returns as they both turn back to what they were originally doing. Ghost reaches to pick up his pen, fixing some wording on the report. It exists only for a moment. Johnny slams the book closed again, huffing out a sad sigh.*

*"I don't," The Scot admits.*

*Simon freezes. His hand halts mid word for a moment, causing the ink to dot the paper slightly. Once he notices, he slowly sets down the pen. The blond could feel the way his own shoulders tensed as he stared at the defeated look on Johnny's face.*

*"You don't join the military if you have something to live for, Si."*

*His heart shatters. Because its not true. He does. He has something to live for. They both do. They have the 141. Gaz, Price, Laswelll— Hell, Alejandro and Rudy. They have each other. Simon has never known a friendship as deep as the one his and Johnny's runs. They flow together as if that's what they were made to do. The men filled every crevice in each*



*other's lives and Simon doesn't know what he'd do if that full feeling had suddenly ceased to exist. He needs him to know that.*

*Without a word, the lieutenant stands. He makes his way over to the bed, sitting next to his best friend. Their eye contact never wavers, never breaks. The two blink at each other for a moment.*

*Simon reaches at his own neck, grabbing the beaded chain that accessorizes it and lifts it over his head. The tags jingle against each other. He leans over, manipulating the long chain to fit over Soap's head instead. The man watches him, gaze gentle.*

*Once it settles on his chest, Simon moves the tags so they rest on the sergeant's heart. He presses down slightly. The name 'Simon "Ghost" Riley' stares back at the original owner. "There," He looks back up to Johnnys eyes, "Something to live for."*

*'Live for me.'*

*It's unsaid between them but it's louder than even the most deafening scream. Johnny brings his hand up, placing his finger's over the Brit's. It's times like this where the lines blur between them. Friendship edging dangerously close to the more territory. Neither will ever make the jump, too afraid they're misreading the situation.*

*Johnny moves then, grabbing his own dog tags. Simon leans forwards and closes his eyes as he feels the warmed metal rest on the back of his neck. The other man copies his earlier movements and forces the tags to sit on the blond's heart as well. He opens his eyes to see the sergeant staring at him with a strange glint in his eye. Maybe adoration? But it was much too soft to be that. "You too," The Scot murmurs, "Come back to me, yeah Lt?"*

*Soap squeezes Simon's hand then. The one that still rested on Johnny's heart.*

*"Always," Ghost says.*

*He empties the gun, throwing the bullets off the side of the roof before wrapping the dog tags around the trigger. He does it in a way so that the trigger jams itself with the chain. A message. A huge fuck you.*

*He places the rifle on the rest of his gear and then the mask. Ghost decides to take the weapons that he needs and nothing else as it would be way too hard to blend in if he takes more. He hears*

footsteps coming up the stairs to the building, they echo the halls of the stairwell with urgency. Due to his many years of practice, Simon slinks into the shadows. Price bursts through the door a second later.

The man's gaze falls on the pile of stuff. He falters for a moment, dragging his feet to where it all lay. The captain crouches down, fingers lifting the tags wrapped around the gun. "Of course they exchanged dog tags," He laughs wetly.

Simons heart breaks. This feels so much like choosing but if it is he has to choose Johnny. Price will be safe. "Okay, Simon," He stands, speaking out into the night, "I hope to see you in the next life. You come back, right? I don't know— be a bloody dog or something because they're going to kill you both for this and I can't stop them."

He clears his throat, speaking into the comms, "Ghost has been compromised. I repeat. Ghost has been compromised. Do not engage."

The man nods at the response he gets through his headset but he lingers. That's when Ghost says his silent goodbye in his head. A thank you for everything. Price means the world to him but he has to protect the reason why his world even continues to move to begin with. It's not personal. As if the man can hear him, he closes his eyes, "I know. I knew this was going to happen... Alright. Give em' hell, Simon."

And with that, Ghost is gone. In more ways than one. Simon Riley was supposed to be the one that remained dead but as he left that pile of items on that rooftop, it was instead Ghost that died tonight. He had killed that man with no mercy. Not even a second thought.

The reputation of the man that wouldn't- couldn't feel crackles apart with every step towards his former inferior officer. Everything he had worked for, gone. He had signed that death warrant, happily.

Soap had heard the gunshot and ran like hell. He had no idea where he was going but he knew he had to get away. He was getting oh so tired of running. But it's not like there was much of a choice. His lungs burned with effort as he weaved through the streets of the city of London. Stupid place to hide out in, he observes now.

He takes a moment to breathe except that's short lived when he's ripped into an alleyway, a hand covering his mouth as his back is pressed up against a body. "Sh," The voice says. It's gruff, slightly harsh. Yet, it brings that feeling of warmth that only one person can

bring. And Johnny physically feels himself relax.

Ghost removes his hand slowly, letting him go. After that, Soap pulls away. He turns to look at the man. Just to be sure. But there he was, in all of his glory and only a balaclava rather than the whole mask get up. "Lt?" He asks incredulously, careful to keep a quiet tone as he does so.

"Yeah, not too sure if I have that title anymore," The man retorts, eyes searching the area wildly, "My guess is no..."

"What?"

A hand grabs his arm, leading him through the alley of the slightly unfamiliar area. Soap takes his arm back, following him. "I shot the guy that was going to snipe you," Simon answers simply, as if it was nothing.

"What?"

They pick up the pace slightly. Soap can't believe that this was even real. He's spent this entire week thinking about Ghost and how much he misses the man while also trying keep a low profile. Now he was here, seeming to be helping him escape the people trying to take him out? Ghost responds, "Don't worry. I didn't kill him."

"No, I mean," He grabs Ghost's good shoulder, forcing him to look at him, "Why would you do that?"

"You said you didn't do it."

Relief floods through Soap's entire being and his heart soars. Someone still believes in him. Ghost still believes in him. It felt like everything at that moment was going to be alright, even if it was most likely a false sense of security. For all he knew, this was a trick. But he trusts Simon. After all they've been through, he trusts him.

Eventually they somehow make it to the edge of the city where the bus takes them out of it. They don't get off until they reach a small town deep in the English countryside.

Soap finally doesn't feel alone.

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"How did you let this happen, Captain?" Major Johnson demands,

anger in his voice like venom. Price can feel Gaz twitch with irritation right next to him and he prays that the man doesn't say anything.

Laswell decided to fly to the base at this point with everything going on. She had been spending some much needed time with her wife but it was all getting so messy, so quick. Especially now, with Ghost going AWOL. And Price feels exhausted.

"He told you that Ghost couldn't. Multiple times," Laswell snaps, "You're the one that decided to make the call and send him back on the field. This isn't the captain's fault."

"Are you saying it's mine?"

"Yes, sir. I am."

Price whips his head over to her. She doesn't back down as the major opens and closes his mouth. He resorts to snapping it shut with a loud clack. Kate nods, speaking loudly, "I'd like to know which exact DNA was found at the scene of Sergeant Mactavish's accused hideout because I have yet to be told."

The major sighs, "It wouldn't make a difference. That is classified information that you don't need to know."

"The hell I don't," She shouts, "Need I remind you of my job title, major?"

The man on the screen sits back, running a hand through his hair. An obvious sign of stress. Price furrows his eyebrows at this. He sits forwards, "Hair. They found hair at the scene."

Price stands up at the same time as Gaz at that. "Are you fucking serious?" The younger one blurts out, "That could've been cut from his head!"

"Not even bloody fingerprints? You had me attempting this man's life over hair that could've been stuck to gum on the bottom of somebody's boot?" Price growled.

"Enough!" The major shouted, "This paired along with the name the intel came from was incriminating enough."

Laswell scoffs loudly at that. She leans forwards. Price admires the strong human being she is because these were the questions that he should've asked from the very beginning. At the time he was too

distracted by the heartbreak. Too dazed. "It's not lost on me how quick your orders were to kill him rather than get to the bottom of the situation. With all due respect, sir, you chose the easy way out of the situation. You don't think there's even the slightest possibility that he could've been framed? With our biggest enemies as of right now being Makarov and Shepherd? You mean to tell me you don't think it's possible?"

She turns suddenly, plucking a piece of hair from Price's currently hatless head. The man makes a surprised noise, before glaring at her. She holds it up, interrogating the man, "Do you see how easy that was? Now imagine he was sleeping. Do you think that would've woken him up?"

The major crosses his arms but doesn't answer. Laswell, frustrated with that, tugs over the keyboard to her. She types in the chat '- John Mactavish.'

"What about that? Huh? And say the person was already in Soap's room, they could easily grab his clothes. Your rat could be right under your nose and your too busy chasing the man they framed," She growls, pushing away the keyboard while holding up the strand of hair, "All because of this. Why in the hell would Soap use his full name? He doesn't even go by John. Hell, only Ghost can call him Johnny. This was pure laziness on your part and you know it. A way to get it over with quickly. That's why you refused to tell me the DNA found on scene because it's the one piece of DNA on the whole body that's easy to obtain. Easy to get without someone noticing."

"We can't take risks."

"Then why are you sending out trained killers to take him out rather than trying to get to the bottom of this? The right way?"

The silence in the room is so unbelievably loud at that moment. Gaz is standing there, jaw hanging open at her as she glares at the screen at the older man on the other side. Price smirks, fighting off laughter. That man deserved that ass whooping from Laswell. She continues, "I understand not being able to take risks, Major. But you didn't even give Soap a chance to explain himself. You didn't look into it further. Just saw the name and went the easiest way out possible. Now we have two soldiers AWOL and absolutely no answers to who's behind all of this or why."

The major sighs, "No, I think we have a pretty good idea of why Ghost

is AWOL. Him having Mactavish's tags was enough of a tell. Then he went and wrapped them around the trigger, breaking the gun may I add, as a gigantic declare of where his loyalties lie. Either they're either partners in this or fraternization was going on. No matter what, his loyalty is outside of this military. We need to get to the bottom of that and know what exactly their relationship was before we think about moving forwards. Now, can anyone give me answers on that?"

"I don't think they even could," Gaz mumbled, quietly enough for the Major to miss. Just then, another soldier bursts through the door. In his hands, a sketchbook.

## Chapter End Notes

:) don't be afraid to leave comments if you like the story. I love feedback and theories!!! Hope you enjoyed

# Drive

## Chapter Summary

Soap and Ghost are officially on the run together. Meanwhile Price, Gaz, and Laswell work through the fallout.

## Chapter Notes

Merry Christmas to those who celebrate! Enjoy your holidays everyone!

The sketchbook closes with a loud slap once the soldier finished reading it out. Price wants to kill Soap. Not actually— Bad wording. But he wants to hurt the man for the mess he had just caused.

Unaware of the situation about to get ten times worse for the boys, he huffs out a breath. In all honesty, the confession itself would've brought a tear to the man's eye if it wasn't for the shitshow they were currently in. Gaz hangs his head.

"Interesting," The major mumbles, writing down something on a notepad in front of him, "And where did you find it?"

"In Ghost's room, sir," The soldier responds. It felt like a gunshot straight to the head. A final blow. There was no denying any romantic undertones to their relationship now and even Price is starting to kick himself over not asking about it sooner.

Sure, he had suspicions but confirmation is different. He supports them fully and wishes them nothing but happiness— Hell, he's glad Simon found someone. It just so happens that this will make everything one hundred times more complicated and if Soap is cleared, they still may not be able to come back to the 141 or even the military in general.

Because now it's not like Ghost up and betrayed them due to a hunch that Soap was innocent. It's not like he tied those dog tags around the gun as a way to make them question why Ghost is refusing to pull the trigger. It's not a "I won't kill him because he's not guilty."

It was due to the fact that they were possibly in a relationship and they had several pieces of evidence now to back it up. He had blindly trusted a man out of love and nothing else. It was proof that the

reason why he failed the first time was because he was in love. Not just with anyone but his subordinate.

Simon has no proof that Soap was innocent. He just wanted to believe he was due to his feelings for the man and now they have to figure out what exactly they were going to do about all of this. Price is officially in mourning of the 141. There was always that little hope that some more evidence would be found that would clear Soap's name and then he could come back. They would be able to bend some rules and have Ghost stay as well. It would all just be some big nightmare that they could come back from and move on. But now?

Ghost fell in love with the one person he shouldn't have and may have acted on it. Then, chose that person over the military when he was being accused of betrayal along with possibly planning an attack. There wasn't much bending they could do. It's looking like more and more like dishonorable discharge, being charged with something, or even death alongside Soap. The higher ups seem so convinced that the sergeant is guilty and now with what's happening with Ghost? Who's to say they won't believe he was an accomplice all along?

Price couldn't imagine being able to kill Soap. He wasn't even sure about any of the so-called evidence against him anymore. But he knows he can't kill Simon.

"So we're officially acting on the assumption that Sergeant Mactavish and Lieutenant Riley were in a romantic relationship while on duty. With the dog tags, the stuff in Ghost's room, the failure to kill Soap twice, and now this book with a love confession found in the lieutenant's room... There's not much room for deniability. Do we think there's a possibility that Riley was his accomplice?" The major asks.

There it is.

"Woah," Laswell says, "Did we just completely forget the point I made two seconds ago?"

"It's just hypotheticals."

"Hypotheticals that could get two innocent men killed," She snaps.

The major booms, "They are far from innocent. They had a workplace relationship and now they're galavanting across all of fuckin' England together as if this is some cheesy romcom with a happy ending to it. Spoiler alert, it's not."



"So that warrants death?" Gaz speaks up now. Price thinks to himself that he would have to buy that kid a drink after this. He's got balls.

"There are no instructions placed to kill them both as of right now."

"But your instructions to kill Soap haven't been lifted either. There are men out there right now looking for him as we speak and they have orders to shoot on sight. If you put a bullet anywhere close to Soap, we both know that there will be nothing but bloodshed followed soon after. If it's true that they are in a relationship, do you think that Simon just going to let you kill him?" Price interrogated now, "If Soap dies, everyone else does too. I don't think you understand that you are playing with a fire that you don't want to play with. Pull the men back. We need to figure something else out."

"Negative, Captain."

"Sir, please don't do thi—"

"Your orders as of right now are the same as they were before. Find Sergeant Mactavish and take him out. If Lieutenant Riley tries to get in our way, we kill him too. We don't have the resources to play the who's innocent and who's not game. For all we know, they are working for Makarov or Shepherd and we just cannot take the risk of them reporting back anymore information to them. I'm sorry, Price."

"You know," Gaz laughs humorlessly, "I'm not doing it. I refuse. You just said there were no orders to kill them both and then proceeded to give that exact order. Laswell brought up a great point that they could be innocent and you—"

The major holds up a hand. Three out of four people in the room were bristling while the old man on the screen smirked. Price feels so much rage inside of him that he could hardly contain the way his clenched fists shook with the urge to punch through the screen. He didn't like this. Every bone in his body was screaming at him that something was *wrong*.

There was absolutely no reason to kill them both. None. Or even one of them. But the Major's thought process makes enough sense to where it wouldn't raise any red flags necessarily. Two possible moles with vital information. Kill on sight.

It's not outlandish.

But it's wrong. There is something very much off about this whole

situation. He makes eye contact with Laswell who was already giving him the same look. The one that screams 'you thinking what I'm thinking?'

The major was in on this and they needed to prove it.

"If you choose to disobey direct orders, I will have no choice but to disband the 141 until further notice," He responds to Gaz, "With how much betrayal seems to be going down within it, I can't take anymore risks. You either follow orders or you don't."

"We will," Price answers just as Gaz opens his mouth, most likely to scream some very colorful words if he was judging based on the man's face. Now, the sergeant looked at him in disbelief. *Gaz keep your fuckin trap shut. Please.*

The rest of the meeting goes by much more peacefully after that. Under the assumption that they were officially all on the same page, Major Johnson seemed a lot more willing to be friendly with them. Once it ends, they gather their stuff and leave. But before the other two could get far, Price motions for Laswell and Gaz to follow him. He leads them to his room where he shuts the door immediately.

"We have to go along with it for right now," He whispers, "Laswell—"

"I'll see what I can find out about him. There may be some link to Shepherd," She nods.

Gaz sits down on the bed, breathing out, "Oh, thank God. You guys caught onto it too."

Price nods at the younger man. He's not too sure if he feels better about this or not because at one point, it definitely seems like Soap is innocent. Then, at another: how the hell were they going to prove the major was the traitor instead?

Even if Simon and Soap could never come back, Price wants to at least give them a possibility of living the rest of their military-free life in peace. This may be the last thing the older man can give them.

"Of course we did. We've been in the game for a very long time, Gaz. Our main goal right now is to go along with orders and hope to hell that the two bloody lovebirds don't get themselves killed before Kate finds out any information. We can't turn because then there's no one on the inside actually getting to the bottom of this whole mess. God help us," Price says. They're going to need all the help they can get.

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After stopping at a small store for some supplies, they make their way to yet another dingy hotel and hit the bell on the front desk. Ghost rests a hand on Soap's back. Despite the fabrics of the glove and the shirt, his muscles loosen at the contact almost immediately. It's a little pathetic, honestly. The fact that the man only has to splay his fingers protectively against his spine and he will instantaneously unwind.

An older woman comes from the back room. She immediately smiles at the two, her white teeth shining brightly at them. "How can I help you boys tonight?" She asks sweetly.

"One room, two beds," Ghost answers, nodding in greeting, "Please."

She sputters for a moment at the mention of two beds until she's walking to the back room again, pulling back her curls into a scrunchie. He doesn't blame her. He's sure that they most likely looked like a couple with how close they're standing to each other and how Ghost holds him in place. Only a moment goes by until she's back, "How many nights?"

"One for now."

After the purchase is complete, Ghost is leading Johnny to the room. He notes, then, how the man seems to be acting different. Not in a way that's bad but certainly more protective and more tactile than he usually would be. "Jeez, Ghost," Johnny jokes, "Take me out to dinner first."

Simon quips, "We're way past that point, Johnny."

The normalcy of this is a comforting feel. Them just being themselves and flirting in a joking manner (but is it?). Just like they've done so many times before on many different missions. He opens the door, holding it for Soap. The shorter nods curtly, making his way into the room with Ghost behind him.

At least this one smells slightly less of mildew. More like cigarettes and another smell he doesn't quite want to think too deeply about. Simon takes off the balaclava, throwing it on the bed that he had claimed closer to the door. Security, Soap observes. He then starts digging in the plastic bag that the Scot had just thrown on the other bed, standing only when he found a bottle of antiseptic. "Let's take a look at that eye, yeah?" The man says, flicking on the bathroom light.

"I already did," Soap responds, following anyways before heaving himself up to sit on the counter, "Put the butterfly stitches on it and everything."

Ghost just hums. Under this lighting, Soap traces out every detail of his face with glee. His nose that was a little crooked from being broke too many times, the sharp jawline, his light eyelashes— Everything. All of those dark feelings that he had just felt a couple of hours before was quickly replaced by warmth.

Fingers tap his side, so he scoots over slightly. It was just enough for Simon to stick his head down towards the sink and wash the eyeblack off of his face. They sit in a comfortable silence.

Soap thinks back to all the times they've gotten ready for bed together back on base. Sometimes, he could tell when he was going to have bad nights plagued with nightmares that would leave him in a pool of sweat. On nights like that, Ghost used to let him sleep on the floor of his room just so when it happens, he would have someone to hold him when he'd wake up choking on sobs.

Simon would jump off of his bed and immediately scoop up Soap into his arms, whispering affirmations in his ear. He'd place a hand on the tags that hung around his neck and say, "I got you. I always got you. You're okay."

It was a side that no one else got to see but Johnny. He honestly didn't have the heart to think too deeply about exactly why that was. Maybe Ghost pitied him. As much as he wanted to believe that maybe they were closer to lovers than friends, he couldn't allow himself. Sometimes he thought about it. But not in moments like that.

Labels would only turn that moment sour. If he's too busy worrying about what they were or if Ghost feels the same, he wouldn't be able to focus on them just existing in that space together. They were each other's lifeline at times.

Then, the blond stands up straight and wipes his face off on his shirt. This caused all of Soap's internal admiration and reminiscence to skirt to a complete stop for a moment as he tugged the fabric away from the Brit. "What are you doing? Ye fuckin' bampot," He detests, "There's towels right there! We are in a bathroom! Now your shirt is all wet—"

Instead of the usual grumble of a response Soap gets to fretting over him, he receives a smile. An actual full on smile. Ghost's white teeth flash in the yellow bathroom light. It causes Soap to cut himself off

mid sentence. Usually "Simon smiles" are tiny and only for a slight moment. A rare delicacy. So this? This was entirely something new.

Then, a hug. A hand rests on the back of his head, scratching slightly into the mohawk. Soap freezes for fraction of a second before reciprocating and Simon quiet literally melts into his arms. "I missed you," A voice purrs into his ear, "So much."

His heart was set ablaze at that. If you had told him a year ago that he'd have the Ghost in his arms talking about missing him? Well, it would be pretty unbelievable. It's not like this is normal behavior but it's not like it's not either? There are times when Simon gets like this, particularly after a stressful mission where he'll wordlessly just stare at Soap until he finally gets affection. Honestly it's as if he's a cat sometimes with that. Especially because eventually it becomes too much and he'll suddenly pull away without warning.

But that doesn't seem to be the case in this tiny motel bathroom in God knows what town in the middle of England. They've been apart for a while now. Hell, the last time they saw each other, one was trying to kill the other.

Soap maneuvers the bigger man between his legs to make the position a little less awkward, causing Simon to sigh in relief and bury his face into the Scot's neck. Honestly, if they were able to stay like this forever, Soap would. He'd pay God. He'd sell his soul to the Devil just for this to last a lifetime. But everything must come to an end eventually sadly.

Ghost pulls away but doesn't go far. He traces over the slash that starts right above his eyebrow and ends at his the middle of his cheek. Soaps hands instinctively slide from his back and stop at lightly resting on the man's waist. The scene is so intimate. It's almost too much to bear. Johnnys eyes flutter closed as the finger passes over his eyelid and opens agains when it stops at his cheek.

"It's deep," Simon observes. Johnny hums in response as Ghost traces it upwards, as if it was something that needed to be mapped out. Then, he starts cleaning it. The joyful hum is replaced with a slight hiss.

"Just glad to have my vision still. Closed my eyes right on time."

Ghost ignores the lighthearted banter, "It's going to scar. And it's not going to fade."

His mouth is bent into a frown. It's grim and there's a look in his eyes

that shows nothing other than guilt. He sighs, "I did that to you. I hate that I did this to you. You're forever marked by my hand and I never wanted to hurt you. But I did."

Soap catches his wrist and stares at the man with concern. Ghost won't meet his eyes so he grabs the man's chin and forces him to look at him while rubbing comforting circles into his pulse point. He could feel the man's heartbeat pick up underneath the pad of his thumb.

"Hey," He mumbles, "It's a scar. We get them all of the time. It's no biggie, Si."

"But that specific scar is from me. Johnny, you were the one person I never wanted to hurt. Especially not physically."

"Don't think of like that. Yeah, you did it but that was also the day you decided to chose me over everything else in your life. You let me live when you had orders to kill me. Every time I look at it, I'll be reminded of that."

"But I believed intel blindly over you-

"No, you didn't. I'm alive. You chose me."

They were so close now that Soap could probably count the number of eyelashes on Simon's eyelids. He was suddenly acutely aware of his knees resting on either side of the other man's hips and how the blond steadied himself on the counter with his free hand. The man in front of him was flushed red, eyes half lidded. "Twice," He corrects, "I chose you twice. The second time I shot a man for you and I would do it a thousand times over again."

Soap lets out a shaky breath at that. It could be so easy. All he has to do is just lean a bit more forwards and they'll meet in the middle, just like they always have. The antiseptic bottle falls, causing them both to jump away from each other. Simon coughs, shaking his head and getting back to work on the cut as if that little moment didn't just happen at all. Damned military training.

"Thank you, by the way," Johnny says.

Simon murmurs back, "For what?"

"For not killing me and then killing a man for me."

"I think I remember specifically saying I didn't kill Bat?"

"Bat? What kinda fuckin' name is Bat?"

Simon smirks, pausing what he was doing to deadpan, "What kind of name is Soap? You jealous, Mactavish?"

Soap scoffs at that. First things first, he doesn't get jealous, okay? He is not the jealous type. If Ghost wanted to, he could go out and choose whoever he wanted and Soap totally wouldn't plot the person's death via rigged microwave explosion every time he saw their face. Not at all. "You wish, Si."

The silence returns between them as Ghost focuses on the cut again. Usually he's a lot more quick with dressing wounds but he probably feels extra responsible for this one since he caused it.

He is suddenly blinded by a light.

"Fuckin' Christ, Ghost. What are you doing?" Johnny flinches away from the sudden brightness, "Where did you even get that?"

"Quit your squirming" Ghost growls, forcing him to look into the light again by hooking two fingers into his shirt collar and tugging. Soap hates the way that a visible shiver runs up his spine at the whole interaction. He hasn't fully recovered from the energy in the air from whatever the hell was about to happen before the god damn bottle fell so he wishes that maybe the touching could be reduced down a bit. He's too acutely aware of every point of contact between them.

Simon still stood in between his legs, the fingers that were resting on his chest now— All too much. But yet, not enough.

He questions the shorter man, lowering the flashlight while doing so, "Did you even make sure that your pupils dilate correctly when you checked for any vision damages?" The resulting response is just Soap forming an 'o' with his mouth. Ghost shakes his head.

"Luckily, it seems to be fine. When you dodged, you leaned back enough to where the blade didn't cut too deeply into your eyelid. You got really lucky there, sergeant. Maybe we should work on your dodging, yeah?"

"Hey," Soap calls out, "You flung a knife at my head and I dodged that one perfectly fine."

Ghost pockets the small flashlight before throwing out all of the trash from them tending to the wound. As he bends over, he places a steady

hand on Soap's thigh. Oh, he will die tonight. Soap is going to die. He stares at the floor for a moment.

Johnny slides off of the counter and stares at the man in concern. But before he can ask, Simon walks away.

They make their way to the main area. The shorter man brushes past the taller, clapping a hand on his shoulder as he does so. He is honestly about to crash onto the bed for much needed rest when a small voice says behind him, "I'm really sorry, Johnny."

Soap stops what he was doing to turn to look at Simon. This was eating him alive. He could see it on the other man's features with how sunken in they were. How for the first time ever, Ghost looks small. He tries to think about how guilty he would feel if it was the other way around and the answer is he'd never forgive himself. Now that times one hundred is probably how the other man feels right now.

"Simon," Johnny says, placing a hand on his shoulder, "I forgive you. I forgave you back when I thought you were going to kill me in that apartment. You were just following orders. I was a presumed guilty man and you were instructed to kill me. But whether or not I forgive you doesn't matter. You need to forgive yourself."

"You're so much more than a mission, Johnny. I-" He interrupts himself, glaring at the wall behind Soap. Whatever he was going to say, it was hard for him to get out. So, Soap won't push. Instead, he takes out the dog tags from underneath his shirt and places Simon's hand on them.

"You got me. You always got me, remember?"



# Sparks

## Chapter Summary

Soap and Ghost make it to the safe house in one piece. Fluff ensues.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Soap wakes up first. The morning light filtering in from the slightly drawn curtains shines into his eyes as he groans. He tumbles out of bed clumsily, mouth feeling like cotton balls from a deep sleep that he somehow got, despite not having any good shut since this whole mess started. Well, until now. His intention was to close the curtain. Instead he trips over the rug on the floor slightly, hissing out a curse as he does so.

Ghost sits up immediately, grabbing his gun and aiming it at the sound. His were eyes like hard like stone. Soap raises up his hands in surrender and Ghost's gaze softens as he throws the gun back onto the nightstand. He runs his hands along his face and throws himself back into the pillows with a grunt of discontent. "Bloody hell, Johnny," He says, hands falling against the mattress as he lulls his head over to look back at him, "Scared the fuck out of me."

His voice was gruff, yet soft. Most likely from sleep but he couldn't lie and say it wasn't doing anything to him. He felt heat pull in his gut. "Sorry, Lt," He breathes.

"Not a lieutenant anymore and you're not a sergeant. We're two criminals on the run now."

"Right," Soap mumbles, finally closing the curtain, "You still Ghost? Or do I call you Simon now?"

He sits down on the taller man's bed rather than his own. Ghost stares up at the roof, pursing his lips at the question before rolling onto his stomach and steadying his cheek on his hand. The look in his eyes was dangerous. A smirk slowly tugged at his scarred lips as he glanced up at him through his blond eyelashes. He hums, "You can call me anything you want, Johnny."

The Scot's eyes grew to the size of golf balls and his heart started

pounding in his ears. Sure, they've flirted on the field. More times than he could count if he's honest with himself, which he chooses not to be. But this was different. It's always more intimate whenever he can see Ghost's face. Especially after the whole bathroom fiasco last night that he's pretty sure wasn't a dream but very much real.

"You're talking mince," Johnny responds once he's landed back into his body.

Ghost groans, hiding his face in the crook of his arm. Soap can absolutely handle that. It doesn't make his mind wander to other instances at all because that would be... Not good. This isn't vacation. This is life or death.

"English."

"You're talking rubbish, Simon."

He stands up, leaving the man on the bed alone. Johnny makes his way over to the bathroom, grabbing some clothes out of the bag of stuff he's been able to accumulate since this all started. Before he closes the door, he hears Ghost sigh, "Guess it's Simon, then."

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"Where are we going?" Soap asks.

They were walking up the barren road, nothing but fields and trees ahead of them for miles. Some houses were littered in little bunches every once in a while but that was really it. After they had checked out from the motel, they both agreed that public transportation from this point on may have to be a no go since they can't risk being seen on cameras. Which means a lot of walking and a lot of hitchhiking.

"I have secret safe houses all throughout England," Ghost answers, as if it's nothing, "We're going to one the next town over so I can plan our next move. It's my favorite one actually."

Soap furrows his eyebrows at his friend. He couldn't make out his expression due to him sporting the balaclava again but he guesses it's most likely his resting face. It's not that surprising, honestly. Ghost could be one paranoid person if you let him. Right now it's working in their favor but sometimes, not so much.

Soap chuckles, "You paranoid bastard."

“Not paranoia if it ends up being needed, now is it Mactavish?”

He guesses that's true. At that point it's more like being vigilant, maybe? Who knows? It works out for them. So he's not complaining. “When you say secret, you mean-?”

Ghost cuts him off, “Not even Price knows.”

Soap leans in closer to the man, a shit eating grin on his face. He elbows him lightly, “So, you do like me.”

“Don't let it get to your head.”

The sound of an engine can be heard in the distance from behind. A hand grips onto his elbow lightly, leading him closer to the grass so that now Ghost is standing on the outside rather than the inside. A proper gentleman.

Soap adjusts his bag slightly as Ghost sticks out a gloved thumb, keeping his hold on the other man. A little car comes into view. It slows slightly. Once it comes to a full stop, the window rolls down to reveal an older man. His hair was snow white and he had several wrinkles on his face from an obviously happy life. He smiles, “Where are you boys off to?”

Soap blinks in surprise at the heavy Scottish accent leaking from his voice before grinning to himself like a madman. “Dover,” Ghost responds.

“What a coincidence! I'm heading there too! It's only a twenty minute drive up the road. Here let me help you with your stuff!” The man fusses, starting to get out of the car and shooing away their attempts at doing it themselves. The trunk opens up. He takes the bag from Soap's shoulder and chucks it in before scurrying them towards the back seat of the car. They both slide in just as the man closes the trunk, heading back to the drivers seat. He purrs, “Off we go!”

After a while of silence, Soap leans forwards while holding out his hand. “I'm Soap,” He introduces himself. The driver happily takes his hand.

“Ah! Another Scotsman! I'm Boyd. Soap is a wee bit doaty, don't you think? What? Your parents really liked cleanin'?”

Soap lets go, laughing slightly at Boyd's teasing while Ghost furrowed his eyebrows at them. He wonders slightly if this was going to be his

worst nightmare, listening to the two of them talk without being able to mutter for them to speak English due to it coming off as rude.

“No, it’s just a nickname.”

“Aye, that’s a relief. And who’s the tall braw?”

Soap looks over at Ghost, urging him to introduce himself. He sits up suddenly. The older man hums his amusement at the blond that obviously gave up on the conversation long before it even started, probably not even expecting them to talk to him. “Uh, Simon,” Ghost says.

“See, boy. That’s a normal name! That’s how you introduce yourself to an old man like me.” Despite the harsh tone, Soap knew he was just poking fun. It reminded him of his grandfather back home before he had past on. The man had a very abrasive tone but always meant well by what he was saying or doing and he always slipped his grandchildren some money behind their parents backs with a wink.

“Fine! Fine. My name’s John,” Soap states, “Long way from home. What’re you doin’ this deep into England?”

Boyd shrugs, “I could ask you the same. I’m picking up my Charles from the ferry. He’s coming back from France with some Christmas gifts for our daughter and grandchildren. You two actually remind me of a younger version of us... Yeah, Charles is a proper Brit as well! Don’t ask me how the hell I ended up with him because I could never tell you. I think my family was more angry about him being from London then him being a man!”

The man laughs at his own joke meanwhile Soap’s cheeks heat up at the implication of them being together. He’s about to tell Boyd that he has it all wrong before Ghost says, “Are you kidding? How do you think he feels? I can hardly understand this one sometimes.”

Johnny blinks at him going along with the pestering as he motions towards the younger Scot, as if to compliment the point he made. Why wouldn’t he deny it? Maybe he just doesn’t want to be rude and wants to let the old man have his fun.

“Oh, that gets better as time goes on. You’ll get used to it eventually and soon you’ll be unknowingly using some slang as well. They say you mirror the people you love, ya’ know? How long have you two been together?”

“A year,” Soap answers before Ghost even can. If he can play this game, so can he. Simon stares at him and he just smirks back.

“Ah, so still kind of fresh, huh? My Charles and I met after I had joined the military. He was a spooky fucker just like your Simon— All standoffish and broody but of course I had to wiggle myself into his life. Next thing we know, we’re retired and are raising a beautiful baby girl together. We got married as soon as it was legal to. Now we got four grandkids and live in a little house with two goldens. Never knew I could have a life like that.”

A hand grabs his thigh suddenly, squeezing it. He turns to see the cool exterior from the man next to him but he knew that was signal to be extra cautious from this moment forwards. Soap placed his hand on his. An ‘I understand.’

He really hopes that this wasn’t a trap. He really liked Boyd. It’s way too similar to their story, which is not a can of worms to dive into right at this moment. So it’s either a trap or a really, really strange sign from the universe. He’d rather the former. Ghost doesn’t let go after, instead choosing to run a thumb along the inside of his thigh. It feels like electricity. It burns. Soap swallows, reminding himself that this was all just part of the act as he grips at Simon’s wrist.

He squeezes twice. ‘Too much.’ Ghost halts the movement immediately, switching to grab Soaps hand. He practically sighs in relief. However, he does avoid all possible eye contact with his... fake boyfriend at that moment. It’s not that he was uncomfortable, it’s that he was way on the opposite side of that feeling and he couldn’t promise if that had continued he wouldn’t of kissed that man silly once the car stopped.

Simon was being... different. He seemed to be pushing boundaries that they never even dared to push before. Like last night in the bathroom and this morning? Now, the car. It’s as if he’s challenging Johnny, pushing until the man finally does something about it. It’s not a creepy thing, no. It’s more of a signal. An assistance.

But that can’t possibly be true. Sure, there’s been times where Soap had felt like they were crossing the line a bit like they were now— though this is more like hurdling over it— but that was just wishful thinking. He’s reading into this all wrong.

Right, possible trap.

“You served?” Ghost questions.

“Yeah,” Boyd sighs, “Twenty years. It lost its appeal. It’s easy to do it when you have something to die for. Gets old after you find something to live for. That was Charles for me.”

The dog tags on his neck sear into his skin. “Simon ‘Ghost’ Riley” being branded into his heart by them where they lay against his bare chest. He wonders if his do the same to Ghost. At that moment, he risks a glance at his former superior, face falling as he doesn’t see the signature beaded chain around the back of his neck.

Why would he take them off? That doesn’t make sense. It kind of stung to see them gone. Maybe they got confiscated from him somehow or something? Soap doesn’t know but it *hurt*.

Simon turns, sees him staring. The light in his eye dims immediately. The rest of the ride is spent with Boyd telling the two about the adventures of him and Charles in their youth. Slowly the anxiety from earlier dissipates and he starts to believe that there’s a possibility they overreacted to what the man had said about serving. As they get closer to their destination, Simon lets go of his hand and takes off the hoodie. Then, the balaclava.

He hands the hoodie to Soap with a, “I know how cold you get, love.”

That nickname sends shocks throughout this body. And he wants nothing more than to be called it again. Soap pulls it over his head and it smells so much like... Ghost. Gunpowder that never seems to leave your skin and just plain old unscented soap. It makes sense that Simon wouldn’t use scented things. Not good for the brand to be smelling like vanilla, he thinks in amusement.

Once they’re in the town, Boyd drops them off with a goodbye. Soap watches him go, happiness swirling in his chest over the two husbands that were able retire and live the rest of their lives out in peace. It gives him hope. Maybe one day.

Simon takes his bag, pulling the the hood over him to cover his mohawk and face. It that moment he realizes that if the camera sees Ghost, no one will know that it’s him unlike Johnny who has a very signature look.

Ghost can just remove the balaclava, as he already has, and be fine to walk around in public without a worry of blowing their cover. The only people that would know who he is are Price and Gaz and they can’t confirm it’s him if he doesn’t even pop up on the military’s radar to begin with.

A hand pushes his head slightly downwards before sliding down to his back, urging him to walk. He does. Sometimes Simon touches him so gently. It sends him for a whirlwind each time that it happens. It makes him feel so unbelievably dizzy, warm, and full.

It makes him feel loved.

Even if he's supposed to be mad at Ghost for the whole dog tag thing, he can't help but allow himself to feel the light that burns within him from the fingers guiding him. His senses are entirely enveloped with Simon. The hoodie that's a bit too loose on him, the smell in the collar of it, the tags clinging together, and the touch on his back.

They make it to the little townhouse and Simon opens the door for him. Johnny steps inside. Once they're both in, he pulls the hood down to see the taller man staring at him. There's a strange look in his eyes as he looks him up and down. He smirks, "You look good in that."

Soap blinks but before he can even thank him, Ghost is pulling out a gun and checking the house thoroughly. The Scot sighs, collapsing onto the couch. Typical Ghost things. He needs to deem it safe before he can actually relax.

After a considerable amount of time, he comes back in, flicking on the light as he pockets the gun. Soap looks around at the house. The walls are bare with hardly any decoration and the only furniture is really just the necessities along with a television and a bookshelf packed to the brim with countless books. A reader? Didn't really pin Simon for that type. But he guesses he was wrong. Everything is in neutral tones and there's no signs of life throughout the whole house. Even in the kitchen, which he can make out slightly if he looks into the dining room. He can only imagine what awaits up the stairs.

There's a sudden weight next to him and a thigh is touching his own. The two men sit in silence. They allow themselves a moment to just decompress. They had walked for about a mile before Boyd had picked them up and even before then they've spent this past week or two with so much drama— it was nice to pretend like all was fine.

"I used them to jam the gun," Ghost finally says, turning his head slightly towards him.

Soap screws up his facial features, utterly confused. Used what to jam what gun? In hindsight, he should've known but he was just so exhausted. He repositions himself so that he's looking directly at

blond, “Huh?”

“I used the dog tags to jam trigger of the gun that they gave me to kill you with,” He whispers back, “It was meant to be a message. Price tried to tell them multiple times that I couldn’t do it and they wouldn’t listen. So, when I finally decided to join you instead I broke the gun with tags I wore everyday— even after you were believed guilty— that signified our bond. Thought it might finally get it out.”

“Message?”

Soap could feel his cheeks heating up at the confession. The eye contact they held at that moment was so intense it burned through his entire being. Ghost breathed, “That I can’t kill you.”

“Can’t or won’t?”

“Exactly as I said. *Can’t.*”

Simon pointedly looks away, studying the floor as if it were the most interesting thing he’s ever seen. He could see the way that he gnawed on the inside of his cheek, his fingers drumming on his own thigh. “You mean too much to me, Johnny,” the man whispers, “Too much. I’ve had nightmares about being the one killing you before all of this. Now that I almost have?”

He stops himself, now glaring a hole into the ground. Soaps about to tell him to stop beating himself up again. That they were in this together now. But he doesn’t get the chance before Simon’s looking at him him, a sad look in his eyes, “Sorry about your tags.”

“Do you want your-“

“No. They still hold the same weight. Even if I don’t have yours anymore. You live and you do it for us.”

You do it for us.

For us.

The urge to kiss him was stronger than it was even back in the bathroom and he needed to do something before he did *something*. Denial of feelings can hurt, yes. But losing Simon would hurt even more and he just can’t take that risk.

So he stands abruptly. Ghost sits up, confusion clear on his face but



Soap pushes him back down by his chest. A little too forcefully, honestly. A slight “oof” comes from the man’s mouth before a small chuckle as Soap runs off. “What are you up to now, Johnny?” He asks.

“Writing utensils?”

“In the kitchen. Junk drawer. It’s the one on the end. What? Do you want to sketch? I can find you some paper. It would explain why you shot up as if the room was on fire... You get like that whenever you have an idea, you know.”

His voice muffled slightly as Johnny went into the kitchen. First things first, it was a nice fucking kitchen. Secondly, Ghost has a junk drawer? Of all people? Ghost?

It didn’t seem real until he opened it and saw the absolute mess in it. There were takeout menus, markers, scrunched up pieces of paper, lightbulbs- you name it. He made a sound of amusement as he grabbed a fine point sharpie out of it.

He makes his way back into the living room, settling back down on the couch as he uncovered the sharpie. Simon raises an eyebrow at him. Soap smiles innocently before tugging the collar of the man’s shirt down without warning.

“You’re going to stretch it!” He complains, “What are you doing?”

Johnny scolds, “Stop moving!”

“Wait, wait—“

Soap halts what he was doing as Ghost rolls his eyes at him. He doesn’t know exactly what the shorter was doing but he’s obviously willing to go along with anything he wants. So he tugs off the shirt enough to expose his chest. It pools on his arms.

Johnny tries his best not to get distracted by this movement and takes his tags out of his shirt, staring at the lettering for a moment before leaning forwards. He locates the area where Ghost’s heart would be and goes to work. Dragging the marker, he tries his best to keep his hand steady as he goes over it a couple times. His former lieutenant watches him, his features in their normal soft resting position as he does so.

Eventually he pulls away and gestures towards what he’s done. On Simon’s chest, he wrote “John ‘Soap’ Mactavish. Task Force 141’ in a

bold letters like the one on the dog tags. It still resembled more of his usual handwriting than the actual tag font but he did the best he could. He sits back, placing the lid back on the marker. "There. So the symbolism is still there," Johnny explains, pleased with himself, "When this is all over, Lt, you got to get that tattooed. That's the rules since you gave away my tags while still wanting me to wear yours, as sweet as the gesture was."

The second part was a joke. He didn't actually expect his best friend to get his name tattooed on his heart. That's ridiculous. So he had said it incredibly lightly in hopes that he would understand that he wasn't actually upset nor did he expect Simon to do that.

Ghost reaches up, hovering his fingers along the writing. He then lets his hand fall to his thigh with a slap. "Whatever you say, Johnny," He muses, pulling back on his shirt.

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They stare at the singular bed, pondering how this was going to work. Every once in a while, they'd catch each other's eye and then quickly look away as if they were burned. After the game went on for a while, Simon huffs in frustration and climbs onto the bed. It's settled then. He gets the bed. That's fine, Soap can sleep on the floor or the couch, wherever. He just needs to go get a blanket.

As soon as he goes to leave, however, he's stopped. Well, not stopped. More like kidnapped. He's been kidnapped.

"No," Simon chides. He wraps an arm around his waist and practically flings him onto the bed. Soap lets out an embarrassing squeak of surprise he hopes that Ghost chooses to never mention. Ever.

After the world was done moving erratically, his head hits pillows and his body rests against the mattress. It had been a very gentle landing despite how fast it was. He blinks. Sure, he knows what happened. But also, what the absolute hell happened? One moment he was standing, now he's in the bed, looking out the window at the full moon glaring back at him. "Steaming Jesus, Si," He grumbles, "You could've just asked to share the bed. You didn't have to manhandle me to another fuckin' dimension, ya numpty."

He readjusts slightly. Simon doesn't say anything for a while but then he's moving and a blankets thrown over Soap's body. "Stay," He commands into his ear, using the same tone of voice he'd use back on the field once upon a time ago. It does send a slight shiver down his

spine. But he can't let this man win whatever game he's playing where he's trying to press boundaries. Can't let him know he's getting to him.

"I'm not a dog. But I'm staying, calm yourself."

He sighs in content at the warmth of the bed, closing his eyes. Ghost settles next to him. It's quiet for a bit and the Scot is almost asleep when—

"Good boy," Comes from the man next to him in a teasing tone.

Johnny reaches out and pinches his thigh, causing the blond to move his leg away with a loud laugh. It's the most beautiful sound that he's ever heard. And it'll play in his ears the day he dies.

### Chapter End Notes

hope you enjoyed this chapter :) please leave comments! I crave them! Also appreciate the fluff while it lasts. We got some sad shit coming starting next chapter

# Take On The World

## Chapter Notes

This may be sloppy. I'm trying to get back into writing after taking a long break. My grandfather had actually just passed away so I've been not really in the correct mindset to do so. But I hope you enjoy it nonetheless!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"Johnny," A voice whispers.

Soap stirs ever so slightly, mumbling gibberish as he does so. He hears soft huffs of laughter along with a hand smoothing back his hair and a sleepy Soap leans into the touch. "I'll be back. I'm going to be gone for a couple of hours. I'll stop by the store to pick up some things, alright?"

He makes a noise of affirmation. The hand moves and Soap mourns the contact immediately. He registers footsteps leaving him behind and without thinking twice about it he says, "Love you."

It's the truth. He knows that voice and he knows he loves whoever it is, even if he's not fully awake enough to register exactly who it is. The footsteps halt as he starts to make his way back into his dreams. Dreams filled with blond hair and laughter.

The door shuts.

---

When Soap awakes again, he's unsure about whether or not that whole moment was a dream. It could be. If not, he genuinely made a fucking fool out of himself. Because there's no way it wasn't, right? Why would he dream that he's falling back into a dream? That doesn't make any sense. Oh God, if he had actually admitted his feelings to Ghost like that then he would just have to genuinely die. He'd die. Simple as that.

It's just weird that he had a dream that Ghost was leaving for a couple of hours only to wake up and discover he was actually gone. The worst part? He hadn't gotten an "I love you, too." So Simon doesn't feel the same. Which is exactly what he's feared this whole time.

Just then, Ghost walks into the room and crashes onto the bed, rubbing at his chest slightly. He squints as if he was in pain. Then, flops his arm back down. It silences the panic in his head. He's acting normal. It must've been a dream. Thank God. "You slept a long time," Ghost observes, "You feeling okay?"

"Aye. Just exhausted from this week, Si. I'll be alright. What's up with your chest? You alright?"

Simon flicks his wrist dismissively. Soap raises his eyebrow slightly but doesn't press any further, opting to shrug it off. He had probably just slept on it wrong or something because he wasn't in any pain yesterday.

"What's the plan today?" Soap asks, laying down next to him. His head rested so close to the man's shoulder that if he just moved a tiny bit, it could rest on top of it.

"Try not to get caught."

---

"Price," The major says, agitation clipping his tone, "Can you just fuckin' cooperate for once?"

Price stands up straighter at that, hardening his gaze. It was three o'clock in the morning and he had been woken up with a loud banging on his door. It was an urgent call, apparently. When he had made his way to the meeting room, Gaz had already been there along with a very annoyed looking Kate.

Pictures from a shop security camera was on the screen. In it were two men walking in the middle of what seemed to be the small streets of Dover, one taller than the other with messy blond hair and the other having head covered by a hood. He could hardly make out the facial features at first. But then, he made the second picture full screen. The blond's head was repositioned better. You could make out a good amount of his facial features.

Bile rose up to his throat. It was Simon.

He kept his features schooled as best as he can, not daring to take his eyes off the screen to look at his teammates in fear that would give it away. He just hoped they were doing the same. Kate doesn't know what Ghost looks like but Gaz does. So he was more worried about the latter.

"Their builds match that of John Mactavish and Simon Riley. I need you to confirm the identity."

"I already told you," Price barks, "I don't know know."

Gaz yawns, covering his mouth as he does so. Price doesn't even know why the younger man was required to be here, since it seems like the major is mostly grilling the captain. Maybe they hope Gaz will spill if he won't?

"How in the hell do you not know? You've known this kid for how long? I know you've seen his face at some point, Price. I'm not stupid," He grits.

He refuses to be the one that gets those two caught. They're innocent. So the only options were between "no" and "I don't know." If he had completely denied that to be Simon, then there was a possibility of someone somehow figuring out that he had lied which means the whole task force would be shut down. Him not being sure was safer. It provides them with an out if the military decided to go make sure it was them.

"Sergeant, do you know?" The major turns his attention onto Gaz. The man stands straighter, tilting slightly closer to the screen with a squint as if he was really looking.

"No, sir," He responds after a beat, "I do not."

"Why can't one of you give me a definitive yes or no?"

Gaz shrugs, "With all due respect sir we only saw his face once a couple of months back. It wasn't for long either. We don't want to give you a definite answer without knowing for sure because that could get two innocent civilians killed or wrapped up in this mess."

The air is tense as the major glares at them. Price could feel the urge to sack him right in the jaw clawing its way through him. He sighs, "Fine. We'll be sending you and some of my men out to go make sure. You head out now. No exceptions."

---

A loud yelling outside disrupted their morning. Ghost motioned for Johnny to stay put where he was sat on the couch as he looked out the window. Soap obliged. His heartbeat was rising in his chest as the other man looked out the window with an impassive gaze. He tore

away, saying, “Get up. We have to go.”

He stands immediately, pulling over the hoodie that was resting on the coffee table from the night before followed by the action of him slipping on his boots. Ghost walks over to a nearby closet, pulling out another but slightly more worn hoodie and a hat. He puts them both on. “What’s going on?” Soap asks.

He really didn’t need to. He figured that they have been found. It’s still good to know what they’re working with, though. “They’re searching the houses. Plan is this: we get to the ferry and head to France. We do that, they’ll need to get clearance to cross borders and that’ll hopefully give us enough time to get a head start.”

He tries his best to squash down the feeling bubbling in his stomach. The one that asks if this is all worth it. This could’ve been over if Soap had been killed that first night when Ghost had hesitated. He’s sure his former lieutenant would’ve been able to stay in the military where he was safe. Not on the run, now a potential target also. Said man now walks over to a bookcase in the corner, pulling on it slightly and Soap has to contain his surprise when the wall opens up. Inside were a bunch of weapons along with many other Ghost masks.

Of course he had a secret container. Why the fuck wouldn’t he. “The hell is this, Si?” Soap jokes, “Mission Impossible?”

Ghost doesn’t answer, just tosses him a small handgun and some ammo before he grabs his own along with some knives. Then, he places a hand on Soap’s back. They leave through the back door, sneaking through the backyard.

Soldiers littered the streets as they tore people out of their homes and threw around belongings, as if the two could possibly be hidden in someone’s blanket basket. They weren’t members from their own base. Seems as if whoever was in charge of finding them has gotten tired of the 141’s betrayals and didn’t trust them enough to carry through with the mission.

He hoped Price and Gaz were okay.

“On me,” Ghost mumbles. They hop over the fence, making as little noise as possible as they make their way through a neighbor’s backyard. A woman shrieks in the distance.

It painfully reminds him of Las Almas. Sometimes he still sees those civilians faces in his nightmares with terrified cries before they’re

silenced with bullet. He shivers at the thought.

“Oi!” A familiar voice booms, “Don’t be so aggressive with them! They have nothing to do with this.”

Both men freeze slightly. Price.

Price was here? Does that mean Gaz is here too? Were they going to be killed by the hands of them? Simon blinks, brown eyes wide. He shakes it away and motions for Soap to keep moving as they hurry their pace a little. Now, slightly more careful. The 141 knows how they work. Knows their tactics better than anyone else would due to the amount of times they’ve worked together. If anyone could catch them, it’s Price and Gaz.

They managed to make it past where the soldiers were currently stationed, now in the area where they had first been dropped off at. People were crowding each other. Some were on the phones trying to get ahold of their loved ones that were most likely at the house. Confusion and panic was clear on their faces. It’s not everyday that the military comes in and demands to search the area. There’s a possibility that the ferries have been halted in an attempt to trap the two fugitives from getting out if they were here.

Soap tries not to let that eat at him. If they can survive the betrayal of Graves, they can survive this too. “Does anyone know what’s going on?” A woman demands, aimlessly.

“I heard that they’re looking for two blokes on the run,” A man answers, “My neighbor overheard them talking about it to each other.”

Ghost’s eyes dart around strategically. Most likely looking for escapes if they were to suddenly find themselves in a mess. Soap was doing the same. There were some alleyways that they could slip into. They manage to make it to the ferries without getting themselves caught but as Soap had suspected, they were all cancelled until further notice.

The man next to him grits his teeth. He grabs Soap’s arm and leads him back to the areas of the shops, steps a bit more frantic but outwardly normal. At this point it was incredibly crowded with everyone all asking each other what they each knew about the situation.

Ghost halts suddenly. Two soldiers that were patrolling the area were walking towards them, not yet making eye contact with them. “Fuck,”



Soap says.

They were running out of time. So really, who could halt him for the thing he does next? He had learned a long time ago that PDA tends to make people uncomfortable and military members were not excluded from that. So, he turns to Ghost. “Kiss me,” He demands.

The blond looks over to look at him, brown eyes wide and puzzled as if he hadn’t heard the man correctly. The two patrollers were closer. So, Soap does what he can. He grabs Simon by his collar, positioning the man with his back to them so that his face would be blocked by the taller. He whispers, “Sorry for this, L.T.”

He presses his lips to Ghost’s. He tenses. But before long, hands grab at his hips and pull him closer. The man kissed him back with too much passion for it to be written off as playing into the part, if he’s honest. The two stay in that position until the boots pass them then, with hesitance, Soap pulls himself away.

The two stay in each others spaces, eyes locked on one another’s, both searching for something even if they’re not quite sure what. Simon swallows, “Why’d you do that?”

His voice was slightly deeper than normal, causing electricity to shoot through the Scot’s veins. He shivers. Simon’s fingers squeeze his hips. “Saw it in a movie once,” Soap answers, “Thought I’d give it a shot.”

“It worked...”

Their moment was ruined by someone accidentally bumping into Ghost. The gravity of their situation came rushing back immediately and the taller man stepped away, clearing his throat. Soon enough, they were off.

Chapter End Notes

Captain America reference bc why not?

# The Light Behind Your Eyes

## Chapter Notes

Before you read:

there will NEVER be any major character deaths in my fics and if there would be, I'd give a fair warning. That being said: I will do fake outs and intense angst.

So. No. You do not have to worry about major character deaths in my fics. good luck!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It was starting to get ridiculous.

Soap knew it and he knew Simon knew it as well. For one, they weren't just going to let him go. The whole area was surrounded with people hunting them, specifically him. They had orders. They needed to follow them.

The two men were hilariously outnumbered. Not to mention that the only weapons they really had were two guns and a handful of knives. No gear. No protective outerwear due to their attempt to get to the ferries by blending in with the other civilians in the areas. Circling back was a death wish. They were fucked. Sure, Las Almas had been similar but at least they each had their own military issued protective layers and comms. They had a safehouse. Also, the shadows weren't necessarily the smartest or the most focused.

It wasn't like they were able to think of a completely solid plan. They had an upper hand in Las Almas with Ghost at the church, up high and with a good sniping position. The former lieutenant had always been calculating their next step. But Soap can see it in his eyes as they ducked through the shadows that even with his best attempts, he had nothing.

They were trained soldiers. Elites. Some of the best, actually. Soap was always confident in his own abilities. Sure, he was no Ghost but he was his own form of an enigma. He's been surviving this whole time, even before Simon had joined him, based off of his own training and skill. Las Almas was one night. This has been weeks. He knew his luck was going to run out soon and if he's honest, he's not sure if he's relieved.

Breaking him from his thoughts, a soldier steps out from the end of the alleyway. He aims the gun at Soap but the Scot quickly throws the knife after pulling it from Ghost's pocket. The taller man turns, watching their enemy fall. "Nice job, Johnny," He muses, a slight smile on his face.

"Learned from the best," Soap replies.

They make their way over to the man. An ugly gurgling sound was coming from him as he hovers his hands over the knife sticking clean out of his chest. He coughs, blood splattering. Guilt pangs at Soap. The kid looked no older than twenty-five.

They had been trying to get through the town with as little casualties as possible. Hopefully, if they find out who framed him, they'd be able to resume their positions in the 141. Doubtful.

"It's too late," The kid slurs with a smile. His teeth were red as the liquid drips from his mouth. Both of the men freeze at his words. Ghost lowers his gun, eyebrows knitting together at his words.

"It doesn't matter if I die," He continues, "You- You lost. He got exactly what he wanted. Revenge is his. H-He wins."

Simon grabs the kid by the collar but by the time he reaches him, he's already slipped away. Brown orbs meet blue. Soap's mind was already churning over the statement, unable to understand what he meant. He could feel it in the back of his mind. But no matter how hard he thought about it, nothing came right away.

The two decide to keep moving. Both were obviously mulling over the words in an attempt to figure it out. Revenge. So, it's most likely Shepherd if that's anything to go by. What did the soldier mean by he wins, though? Soap was still alive. Wasn't his obvious goal to have him killed? Also, isn't that still his goal? Just how deep did thing run?

Maybe it's not a good thing that Simon had turned, now that he thinks of it. They have absolutely zero resources or help to look further into this theory that's just gained a good amount of evidence from those words alone. Who else could it be? Graves was dead.

Maybe Ghost could've faked Soap's death? But he knew at that moment Ghost hadn't necessarily been under the assumption that he was entirely innocent yet. Just that he couldn't kill him. By the time that he had, they already doubted his abilities to perform his task and had sent someone to assist him. Shepherd was playing his cards well,

if he was the one in charge but he never doubted that when the man did strike again it would've been devastating. Just not like this.

What would've happened if Ghost killed him that night? Maybe the 141 would've been able to have a chance to actually stop Shepherd if this is his handiwork. Maybe— Wait.

If Ghost had been able to kill him, the 141 would've had a chance to stop Shepherd.

Soap stops in his tracks abruptly. Simon turns to him as he stares down at the ground, eyes wide. They were banking on this. Shepherd had known. This wasn't about anything but tearing apart the exact group that took him down.

Ghost was saying something to him but he couldn't hear it. There was a distinct ringing in his ears. His heart was pounding loudly in his chest and he wishes he came to the realization way earlier. He should've died. If he died, at least Price, Ghost, and Gaz would've been together when they caught onto the fact that it was Shepherd, like he is now. Now the 141 is a scrambled mess. A mess that was created simply by Soap still being here. Now Ghost is a fugitive too.

Shepherd was planning something and he needed the 141 out of his way to do it. If Soap had known, he would've driven that knife into his chest himself while telling Ghost it was okay. That the group can't fall apart. They were exactly where the old man wanted him and they were playing right into it without even realizing.

Soap should've died that night. A hand rests on his shoulder and he's brought back to see his brown eyes staring at him with concern. All that he's able to say is, "You should've killed me."

The man stares at him in horror as he asks, "Johnny, what?"

Shepherd was winning. They weren't together. They weren't coordinated. Soap was a pawn in the chess match. Wasn't important. The player should've given it up long ago but for some reason was using it to protect the king. He was backed in a corner.

"He wins," Soap repeats.

"Johnny, what are you on about?" Ghost growls, grabbing his other shoulder now and shaking him slightly.

"Shepherd's behind this. He knew you wouldn't be able to kill me. This

was his plan. He's planning something bigger and he needed us out of the way to do it. Why didn't I see it earlier?"

Simon seems to piece it together all in his head as the words clumsily tumble out of his mouth. They need to warn Price and Gaz. Maybe they could convince them that he was innocent? Soap could feel his chest starting to constrict with every passing second at this knee revelation. They were so busy keeping him alive and running that they were ignoring the bigger problem at hand. Not like they had much of a choice, but still.

This somehow felt like his fault.

"Johnny," Simon says, grabbing his face, "We will figure this out. I need your head clear, alright? New plan: we find Price and Gaz and try to tell them everything."

"Ghost, how deep does this run?"

"Too deep if he knew about it. But we can trust Price and Gaz. I'm sure they've already caught onto something not being right about this situation. But I need you to focus. There is a target on your back and we can't lose you, alright?"

"This is a mess, Lt," Soap mumbles, accidentally falling into the old nickname. It was a comfort at this moment, going back into their old habits.

"Not any bigger of a mess than Las Almas," Simon soothes as he shakes him slightly then, desperation in his eyes, "I need you focused. Tell me you understand, Johnny."

Soap places a hand on one of his, nodding and swallowing, "I understand."

Ghost lets go then, nodding. He gestures for them to continue moving, escaping the town long forgotten. Now they have to try to get in contact with one of the men they're running from.

---

Nighttime had come.

The two had been running around the town as best as they could, managing to avoid any trouble. Soap should've known that their luck was running out soon. It had all happened so fast that they hadn't

even had time to prepare. In hindsight, it's obvious that there would be snipers positioned on the rooftops of the buildings. The worst part: they were so close.

"Ghost," Soap whispers, grabbing the man's arm. Brown eyes turn to face him right as he pointing to Gaz who was visibly arguing with one of the other soldiers. A scared civilian stands behind him. Whatever he said peeved his teammate off enough for him to walk away, leaving their friend to comfort the woman. No other soldiers were seen. Ghost nods.

They always worked so well together, able to read each other based off of just little gestures like that alone. It was one of the many reasons they worked so well together. The man sneaks out into the clearing, diving behind a car without any issues.

Soap thinks he's in the clear after a quick scan at the rooftops, not seeing any telltale sign of one. Naive. It was so naive. As soon as he goes to follow Ghost, gunshots sound off. The Brit grabs him, pulling him to the behind the car. "Soap?" Gaz yells, "Ghost?"

Simon lifts his gun, shooting the sniper down before turning to their friend with the gun aimed directly at him. Soap can't move. Why can't he move? He hears a gun hit the ground in the distance along with two voices speaking to one another but it's slightly jumbled. Almost as if he were underwater.

"Just... to talk..." That was Ghost.

"That's... looking to do too." Gaz.

"So... we... agreement?"

Soap looks down, seeing blood on his shaking hands. He moves them slightly. A crimson color was pooling around his abdomen and suddenly pain came rushing to him in a quick fashion. Ghost goes to stand, turning his attention on the shorter man when he doesn't follow. Something clatters to the ground. The gun, he registers.

"Simon," He says.

"No," Ghost whispers, "Johnny, hey. Johnny, look at me."

His head feels heavy but he does as asked, wide blue eyes staring up at even wider brown ones. Hands slap his away, applying pressure and causing him to yelp out in pain. The low rumble of Simon's voice is

telling him that he's going to be okay but he's not sure if he believes it.

They were so close.

Soap wants to close his eyes. He feels them starting to but is immediately jolted awake by the sound of a fist hitting metal and Ghost screaming, "Fuckin' hell. Gaz, I need your kit!"

The blood was coming out fast. It was pointless and they both knew it. There was no going to a hospital or receiving medical assistance from an exfil. This was going to be the end of the line for him. A pair of footsteps come around the car and Soap turns his head to see Gaz, frozen in place.

A medkit hung loosely between his fingertips. He shook his head suddenly, crouching down at Soap's other side and handing Ghost the item. What were they doing? They can't save him.

"Shepherd's behind this," Ghost explains to the sergeant, ripping open the pack. Soap cries out once the hands that were on him were replaced by gauze. Gaz slaps a hand over his mouth.

"We figured," He responds, "Laswell's working on finding a connection between him and the major. We've been following orders trying to make sure he doesn't suspect that we know somethings up... Ghost, this looks bad."

His head was starting to feel fuzzy as he lulls it over to look at his former lieutenant. The pale moonlight shone in his pale hair, making it look almost silver in the lighting. This was his last time seeing him. He knows it. There was so much that he should've said before this happened.

This can't all be for nothing. He refuses. They're fretting over him when they should be cutting their loses and regrouping. As a team. He pulls Gaz's hand away.

"Simon," He croaks, "You need to go."

The man stops. Soap can feel how wet his eyes were getting from the seering fire in his abdomen. He could feel both of their eyes on him but he was only focused on one pair. "Go with Gaz," He instructs.

"Johnny—"

Soap swallows, "I'm not going to make it. I can't have you risking

anymore for me. This can't all be for nothing. Get Shepherd. Finish the job. Put a bullet in his head for me, yeah Lt?"

"Negative."

"Simon, please."

He could see the tears forming in Simon's eyes now. There's a war going on in there. He can see it. Soap has a good point. So why won't he do it? He's already helped him so much. "No," Ghost snaps.

It felt like hell to move his head again but he shoots a look at Gaz, pleading with his gaze. His friend looked back at him. There was understanding there but above that there was a deep grief as he watched Soap bleed out in front of him with nothing he could possibly do.

The sergeant reached out, grabbing Soap's hand and squeezing onto it tightly. They smile at each other. Guess this was going to be the big goodbye between them, huh? "I'm sorry," Gaz says, voice shaking.

Soap doesn't blame him. He never could. This wasn't Gaz's fault. This was no one's fault but the man who framed him. It was his own for not being more vigilant.

What a pretty shitty ending.

His eyes fluttered closed, despite the pleas for them not to.

## Chapter End Notes

Chapter was kinda short but the next one will be longer with a LOT happening. angst starts up again. ;)



# Hurts Like Hell

## Chapter Summary

Remember my note from the past chapter!!!

"Soap, Soap," Gaz shakes Johnny slightly, causing Ghost to look up. He reaches over, grabbing his cheeks to make the Scot face him. His limp head follows way too easily and he is met with Soap's closed eyes. His heart drops.

It can't end like this. It won't. He refuses. "No," He doesn't even register his own voice that's whispering at that moment or that he's started shaking Johnny in an attempt to wake him up. It's feeble of course. He's losing blood quickly. At one point, Gaz had leaned over to take over what Ghost was doing just a moment before. He starts packing the wound with gauze, hands shaking.

Simon knows his emotions are on full display at this point. He can't find it in him to care. "Johnny, don't do this to me," He gasps out between his staggering breaths, "Please."

It's as if he expects those beautiful blue eyes to open and a smile to appear on his slack lips, ever paling cheeks to turn a glorious shade of pink upon seeing the former lieutenant worry over him. His chest burns. It aches. It wants him back. His heart. It wants him back. What was this even all for? There was nothing to fight for if he didn't have Johnny.

The blond leans forward, placing his forehead on the unconscious man's as Gaz checks the pulse. The wetness on his cheeks from the tears weren't even as cold as the man's skin. "I risked everything for you. You can't leave me. Please, Johnny I risked it all. I did all for you and if you wake up, I promise I'll do better at protecting you. You just gotta wake up," He sobs out, shaking him slightly.

His brain, usually so calculated, feels thick with emotions as his thoughts spin around aimlessly. Think. He needs to think. Not being able to react in situations like this means death. This time— Johnny's. It can't happen. It won't. Images of him behind a cell flash in his mind as he wallows around the rest of his days, without the loud brightness of a man beside him. Instead, cold and dead. Six feet under just the same as anyone else who HES ever dared to care about. Why did he think Johnny was any different?

No.

He can't think like that. Not now. Not when Soap still has a chance. He may be fading slowly underneath the moonlight against some stupid car, but he still has a chance. He just needs to get his head on straight.

"Ghost," Gaz says, grabbing his arm, "You with me, mate?"

Simon sits up. Then, blinks at him, slowly. The panic clutches at him in the frantic look in the sergeants eyes, desperation across every feature on his face. Once he's sure that the other man is paying attention, he continues, "He's not going to make it without any extra medical care. I don't know what to do. If we take him, he may die. He can't go to a hospital. I need you to focus. What's the plan? I'll follow your lead."

The younger man's voice is rushed but full of complete trust. He looks back down at Soap— Johnny. His Johnny. The love of his life, even if he never told him, who's bleeding out in front of him. His brain clicks back online. A kind, broken smile comes to his head along with long, black hair and teary brown eyes. A promise.

*"I owe you one. You ever need my help, just knock on the wall four times and I'll be right over."*

Of course.

Simon takes a deep breath, nodding to himself. "Here's the plan," He says to Gaz, "I have someone who can help me. She's a surgeon at a nearby hospital. But, to everyone but Price, he's dead. In a week, you go to that pub that we always head off to and we'll update each other via her. Make sure you two aren't followed. Understood?"

He goes to scoop Johnny up in his arms but Gaz doesn't let go. Instead, he suggests, "Why don't we just go with you?"

"Negative. I need people on the inside. Earlier today we ran into one of Shepherd's men and his dying breath was about us losing. Soap believes it's the 141 he meant. We have no idea how deep this runs and we need to act accordingly. I'd love to tell you more but Gaz, I need to go. He's already lost a lot of blood and we're running out of precious time. Give us a week. Let Johnny heal and find out as much as you can."

"And if he dies?"

“Get the hell out of dodge,” Ghost warns, standing up now with Soap limply in his arms, “You don’t want to see my way of doing things.”

With that, he quickly starts to make his way back to the safe house. Thunder claps overhead, as if an omen for what’s to come as the rain starts to drizzle down.

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*Ghost has always been perceptive. While on leave, he jumps between safe house to safe house, sometimes in some that are off the records. It happens whenever theres a particularly bad mission that sends him into deep spouts of paranoia and Las Almas had to have been the biggest shitshow that he’s ever seen, honestly. It was made one hundred times worse by Johnny being there and being the one that got hurt.*

*No matter what he did, he couldn’t keep the Scot off his mind. It resulted in him pacing back and forth in the living room of the small townhouse he was currently in. He couldn’t figure out what was with him. Every night, his dreams were haunted not by the ghosts if his past but by Johnny getting shot and falling onto the asphalt. This time, he didn’t get up. Part of him wishes he had accepted Soap’s number when offered but at the time he thought it would be inappropriate.*

*There was no reason for them to interact outside of their career. They were soldiers. Johnny was his sergeant. They weren’t friends. Yet, here he is, chewing on his nails and staring at his phone laid down on the couch. Would it really be inappropriate to dial Price and ask for his number? Just to make sure he’s okay?*

**TW // ABUSE (will tell you when its safe to read again.)**

*He was battling a war inside his head, unsure of which side was winning. The aching want for his subordinate was something that felt so overwhelming but his protective urge to keep him safe by keeping away was just as strong. Just when he was about to come to a conclusion, a thud from next door caused him to physically jump.*

*Ghost rolls his eyes. Thats one thing about this safe house that he can’t stand. The walls are paper thin and the neighbors could be very loud at times, which he should expect from a young couple that seems to like company. It helped blend him in though. Many people wouldn’t suspect that someone as private as the man would live in a townhouse next door to a couple that loves to party so it was the perfect coverup. Still, annoyance pricked at him.*

There was a crash. All annoyance filed away immediately, turning into concern and caution. That didn't sound like their typical partygoers falling over from too much alcohol, not at all. Ghost turns, placing his ear on the wall that connects them. Through it, he could hear a man screaming and a woman crying very loudly before she was abruptly cut off.

Flashbacks from his childhood montages in his vision, his mom holding him as his father lays his hands on her. Venomous words would spit from his mouth as he does so. His hair stands up on the back of his neck, almost getting lost in the memories until he hears the young woman shout, "Please, Brian! Don't!"

Coming out of his own mind, Ghost jumps into action. He doesn't even put on his shoes as he rushes out the front door, sliding the balaclava on his head as he does so. He easily jumps the small fence that separates their two units, panic creating a bile up on his throat as his mothers cries echo in his head. Without waiting, he slams his shoulder into the wooden door. It bangs against the wall loud enough to cause both of the two to stare at the intruder.

What he sees is horrible.

Annabelle, his neighbor, is on the ground with blood pouring out of her nose as her boyfriend stand above her. His fist is clenched into the hem of her crop top as he holds a knife to her throat. The coffee table is under her knees, knocked on it's side with whatever was on it strewn all around them. He rushes forwards, tackling who he assumes is Brian with a quick, "Get the hell off of her."

As soon as she's free from her attacker's grip, she scrambles away and curls in on herself in the nearest corner. Her shaking hands are clutched to her chest as she sobs. Ghost quickly tackles the knife from his grip, its loud clattering across the floor drowned out by her wailing.

Ghost pins Brian, easily. He his attention to her, asking, "You alright?"

She nods in response. The man underneath of him is spitting and protesting in his grip, which only makes him tighten it in a way that he's sure will leave bruises. Now, he's a private person. But he's always been a protector, having it be forced upon him from a young age after watching his mother go through this exact thing. It stems from the fear of being the only man he's ever been afraid of. "Call the police," He instructs her.

It could fuck him over in the long run, he knows that. But, men like this don't stop. She's not safe here as long as this asshole is walking the streets. Annabelle jumps into action, diving for her phone that was abandoned on

*the ground before she dials with shaky hands.*

*When they arrive, they take away Brian in handcuffs and he glares back at him with the stare that has put the fear of God in so many of his enemies. The punk wasn't any different. He tells the police what happened and when they ask for his name, he informs them mmm that he can't due to being in the military under requests to conceal his identity. They luckily accept it.*

*They try to take Annabella to the hospital but she refuses to go. "I'm fine," She laughs dryly, "Just a couple of bruises and a bloody nose."*

*Once they're gone, he places a careful hand on her shoulder to which she nods. He notices then that she's still in her surgical scrubs signaling she either just got home from work or was about to head out to clock in. Ghost goes to go back to his own house, definitely settled on calling Price now when she reaches out and asks, "Can I stay with you? Just for a couple of nights until the door is fixed and I know for sure he won't be back. I have nowhere else to go. All of our friends are his and both of my parents..."*

*He contemplates it for moment. Paranoia was itching at his thoughts, screaming at him it wasn't safe. But when he looks at her, he sees his mother. So, he obliges. Ghost stays with her while she gets together some clothes and necessities, cleaning up the coffee table as he waits. Leaving her to do that will just bring back the memory of what happened and he's familiar with how haunting memories can be.*

**SAFE TO READ. DOES HAVE THEM TALKING ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED THOUGH SO STILL READ WITH CAUTION.**

*They make their way back to his place where he shows her the room, letting her know she can have it while she's there. Annabella tries to object but he just shuts her down. This is the gentlest Ghost has been with another person in a long time, usually choosing to mind his own business and not focus on the things that can't be changed. But this could be. She deserved safety.*

*Once she's showering, he heads back to the couch and picks up his phone to dial Price. The captain answers the second ring, "Ghost? Is everything alright?"*

*"Had a rough night," Ghost responds, "But I'm alright. Just callin' to ask a favor is all."*

*"Anything."*

*"Do you happen to have Johnny's number? I want to check up on him."*

*The captain laughs on the other side of the line. Ghost's cheeks heat up underneath the balaclava at the action which is certainly new for him. It wasn't necessarily embarrassment per say. He couldn't place the feeling exactly but its something he always experiences while talking about the Scot. After he finishes, he states in a more relaxed tone, "Simon. Its been three days."*

*"Do you have it or not, Price?" Ghost bites back with no real heat.*

*"Yes, hold on," Price sighs. Theres some rustling on the other side of the line along with the signature dad groan from getting up after being comfortable in a spot. He then asks, "Just Soap's? Not Gaz's or anything?"*

*"Just Johnny's."*

*"Always just Johnny's, aye Simon?"*

*His cheeks feel hot again but he doesn't have time to answer before Price is listing off some numbers. Ghost scrambles for some papers and a pen, writing down what the captain was saying. Once he gets it, they hang up. He doesn't always himself any time to hesitate before he's typing in the number that was given to him and holding it up to his ear.*

*Nerves eat him alive as it rings. The urge to bite his nails again is strong but he ignores it. At that moment, Annabella comes in from the kitchen and plops down on the couch next to him with a pint of ice cream along with a spoon. It was his ice cream. He decides to let her have it.*

*"Soap," Johnny answers eventually.*

*Ghost can't help the sigh of relief that comes from him upon hearing the sergeant's voice. He feels the tension leaving his muscles almost instantly. He breathes, "Johnny."*

*"Ghost?" He questions, "What- Hi. How did you get my number?"*

*The woman next to him is now watching in interest as she bring her knees up to her chest and places a scoop of the frozen treat in her mouth. He chooses to ignore her, opting to talk to the one person who seems to melt away all of his problems. "Got it from Price."*

*He teases, "Miss me, Lt?"*

*"Just wanted to check up on you. How's the arm?"*

*"You really have gone soft on me, aye?" Johnny chuckles, "It's going. It's a*

pain in my ass though. Can't do half of the things I usually do on leave because of it but I'll live."

"You better."

"Aye. Everything okay with you? Can't say I was expecting a call from my reclusive lieutenant— not that im complaining, I do tend to miss your spooky ass when we're apart."

Ghost smiles at that. His heart was thumping practically out of his chest from the sentiment, even if they hadn't been separated for long. He huffs out a laugh, "I'm not the one who got shot. I'll live. Again just wanted to check up on you... See how you were doing."

"Yeah," Johnny responds back softly, "You said that. Deny it all you want, Lt but I know you miss me."

"Never denied anything, Johnny."

All he gets back is an interested hum. They stay silent on the line and he glances over at Annabelle, who is now smirking mischievously at the man. Right. Annabelle. He says back, "Well, I have to go. Had quite a night and I'm still dealing with some things—"

"What do you mean? You solid?"

"Yes, Johnny," Ghost smiles again, softly reassuring him, "I'm solid."

"Alright, well now that I have your number I'm going to be texting you. Just a fair warning."

"Alright. Goodnight, Johnny."

"Night, Ghost."

They hang up and almost immediately Annabelle is jumping in her spot, brown eyes wide with excitement. "Who's Johnny?" She pesters.

He makes a noncommittal swipe at the air in attempt to get her to back off because he doesn't even know who that man is to him. Just that he's Johnny. Just that he'll do anything for that man. Spill his guts out on the floor if he so dared to ask him to. "Don't worry about that. How're you doing?"

"I'm still shook up," She sighs, "You don't get over your boyfriend trying to..."

*Her eyes unfocus as she trails off. The haunted look on her face is sure to haunt his nightmares. He feels for the girl, he really does. He's been there with his own father and knows what it can do to your psyche. She shakes her head, "Anyways, thank you. You saved my life tonight. I don't know what would've happened if you didn't show up."*

*"No need to thank me."*

*"Yes, there is. You didn't have to do that. No one else has in my whole year of living here and then you allowed me to stay... Seriously, thank you."*

*He feels awkward from the conversation now. Not used to the feeling of someone thanking him or pointing out something good that he's done. So, he just nods.*

*The following days, he teaches her some self defense to ease her fears of being vulnerable if he comes back. In that time, she's learned his name and he can say that they've become quite close. On the her last day there, as she stands at the door with her bag, she places a hand on his shoulder and says, "I owe you one. You ever need my help, just knock on the wall four times and I'll be right over."*

He slams open his door, rain dripping off of him and chilling into his bone as he closes it behind him. Johnny is still limp in his arms. He quickly carries the man to the dining room before placing him on the table where he rips off his glove to feel for a pulse. He chokes out a sound of relief at the thumping underneath his fingertips. It's faint but there.

He places his forehead to his yet again, saying, "That's my boy, Johnny. Just keep fighting."

Panic is back in his chest as he rushes to the living room before hammering his fist onto the wall four times. He prays to a God that he doesn't believe in that she's home. A moment or so passes before there's a knock on his door, frantic. He closes the distance with two steps before opening it to see a concerned Annabelle on the other side, features screwed up with worry. Behind her is a man he's never seen before who looks so confused at the situation playing out right now.

"Simon? Are you okay? There's a stay inside order and I wasn't-"

"It's Johnny. Please, I never wanted to cash this in because you don't owe me anything but you need to help him," He desperately responds and before he's even finished, she pushes past him. The woman looks



around before her eyes widen at the sight of feet on the dining table peeking around the corner from where they stand.

She immediately runs into the room with Simon in toe, asking, "What am I looking at?"

The man that he doesn't know follows them after closing the door and locking it. Upon seeing a bloody and pale Johnny he lets out a, "Holy shit!"

"Shot. In the abdomen. Unconscious but still has a pulse," Simon swallows, "I'm not sure if it hit anything vital or if it even went clean through but he lost a lot of blood."

Annabelle climbs onto the table, hovering over Johnny and ripping open his shirt. She eyes the bullet wound before checking his pulse, not looking so pleased as he did at the result, "Jackson, I need you to get me a needle, thread, that heavy duty flashlight, alcohol, and a knife from our house."

Jackson stands, staring at Soap in shock. So not a doctor like her, then. Judging based off his scrawny appearance and callous free hands, he probably works in some type of office behind a computer. Not used to seeing stuff like this. Poor bastard. Poor but lucky Bastard. "Jackson," She barks, "Go!"

At her tone, he snaps out of it and runs out the door. She then turns Johnny onto his side, nodding prodding her hands at his back. "Based on the placement, it didn't hit his spine which is good. May have nicked something but I won't know for sure until I get in there. You're right. He's lost a lot of blood. Simon, I can try my best but his pulse is weak and I can't guarantee you anything. But I will try my best," She informs.

Her voice has a professional tone to it, her face not giving up any type of emotion. But she's honest. Which, he appreciates. Jackson comes barreling in, storming through the living room and then spilling the contents in front of her. His eyes are wild. She grabs his chin, forcing him to look at her, "Baby, I need you with me, okay? I can't do this on my own and I need you calm, okay?"

"Okay," He breathes out, "Okay. What exactly is going on? How do you know him?"

"I'll explain all of that later. Right now, we have to focus. Thread the needle for me while I sterilize the knife."

Simon sits back, watching the two helplessly. Every second that Johnny's unconscious, a new anger starts to form in his chest. A bubbling rage threatening to take hold of him. His eyes are locked onto the man's slacked expression as she pours the whiskey onto the knife, as she cuts into him with Jackson holding the flashlight for her. He traces his eyes over the now healed cut on his face— Given to him by his hand. All because of Shepherd. Ghost claws at him, wanting to be let free.

Annabella pauses to feel Johnny's pulse and her eyes go wide. "Shit," She curses out. Simon pushes himself off of the wall, dread forming in his stomach as his brain feels like mush. The knife clattering to the table reminds him of the time where she and him met as she pushes upwards, starting to perform CPR. He once saved her life. Now she's attempting to save his.

He falls onto his knees behind where Johnny's head lays, grabbing at his face. "Don't do this to me, Johnny. Please," He begs, "Remember your promise."

Ghost bangs and punches at him. The rage and desperation mix inside of him, coming together to form something that feels strangely like vomit. As she works, Simon can feel himself slipping away into the persona that's kept him safe this whole time. He knows Ghost is more of a coping mechanism than a separate being from him. It's still him. It was just a hardened shield. But with every passing moment where Johnny stays unbreathing, Simon slowly flickers away. This whole time, he's been trying to stay Simon. Trying to be his most vulnerable self since up and leaving the military to protect what he loves. Ghost is rage and work and war.

But one thing that Simon and Ghost have in common: they both love Johnny.

Ghost loving, however, is more rare. So in the end, that part of him wins. He slowly stands, giving into his rage and unable to see the man he cares about like this while standing around helplessly. Jackson must sense the difference in him as he takes a step back slightly. "Don't give up," He instructs Annabella, "I'll be back."

He pushes past Jackson and goes to the closet where he has all of his weapons stored just in case of an emergency. Once inside, he pulls a vest over him. The new tattoo on his chest burns as he stocks himself with weapons, Johnny's handwriting reminding him just what he's doing this for. He needs answers. He needs them now. Enough of the

running and the hiding. If it's not to keep Soap safe then there was no point of it when he could be doing *more*.

He grabs one of the Ghost masks, tracing his hand over the hard skull before grabbing some eye paint and lazily smearing it over. Then, he slides on the mask.

# Courtesy Call

## Chapter Summary

Ghost gets revenge. They find out more about Shepherd.

## Chapter Notes

Two chapters in one night as a treat for not updating in a while.

“Price!” A familiar voice yells as footsteps tread his way. Price turns, seeing Gaz running at him full speed and covered in blood. His heart physically stops at the sight before he’s rushing to meet him halfway.

“What happened? Son, why are you covered in blood?” He asks the sergeant, eyes raking over the state he’s in.

Gaz heaves, “It’s not mine.”

“Who-“

“Soap’s.”

He feels like he’s going to throw up. Gaz quickly catches him up to speed on everything that had just happened in the last hour. His mind isn’t settled, however. Not with the idea of Soap potentially bleeding out somewhere in this town with possibly no medical help besides a surgeon who may not even be around.

They begin to walk, agreeing to radio the men what happened but then suddenly the man next to him stops. He looks over at Price with a blank expression, saying, “Punch me.”

“What?” Price asks, shock clear in his voice.

“We need a cover story for why I didn’t radio it in right away and why we don’t have the body. We’ll say Ghost knocked me out after killing Hernandez for shooting him and that’s why there’s an hour of this whole timeline missing,” Gaz explains, “Punch me.”

It’s smart. It’ll get the major off their asses. He may still see right through them but there’s nothing he can do if there’s physical proof right on Garrick’s face. He places a hand on the sergeant’s shoulder, shooting an apologetic look his way before winding back his fist and doing exactly that.

Gaz let's out a gruff, stumbling over a bit. Even though it makes sense, Price can't help but feel the guilt that courses through him at the sight. The things they do for their own. Soap and Ghost certainly owe the two a round of drinks after this. Maybe even three. Once the man recovers, they both proceed to the normal plan and Gaz lifts up his radio, "Target taken care of. Was knocked out before I could take the body and Hernandez is KIA."

There's no answer. Gaz furrows together his eyebrows at this, repeating the sentence again followed by a, "Anyone copy?"

No response. Price immediately takes out his gun, pushing forwards as Gaz does the same. The silence around them is suddenly daunting, heavy with the unknown of what it could mean. They make their way back to the main area where everyone was once and he swear that a comical tumbleweed could pass them at any moment. "Price," Gaz whispers, "Why is it so quiet?"

Price doesn't answer, opting to observe their surroundings. He motions for them to push forwards. It's not so long before they stumble upon one of their men, laying in a pool of his own blood. Gaz stares at the body with wide eyes as he checks for a pulse. He shakes his head. "What does it mean?" There's an edge in the younger one's voice, signaling he already knew what it meant.

Grief hits him like a truck. He closes his eyes, remembering a loud, Scottish accent followed by a laugh and clap on his shoulder. He remembers a young kid with so much potential lying on his forms to try and get into the military before legally being allowed to. He remembers the youngest ever to pass the SAS selection and the joy on his face as he hugged Price afterwards, pride filling through the older man.

Nights out drinking when a certain someone got a little too out of hand, Ghost holding his weight as they drug him back to base. The intense loyalty to his friends. The love he shared. The way he helped made the 141 a home.

He remembers Soap.

"Soap's dead," Price breathes out shakily, eyes filling with tears. He failed him. He really tried. He really, really tried. He should've fought harder for him. Should've screamed to the rooftops he was innocent until someone believed him.

Simon was on a rampage. He was going to find every last person

responsible for this and take them out one by one. Silently. Efficiently. Just as he was known to do to enemies. He's sure the man wouldn't hurt them but part of him wishes that he would hurt at least the captain. It feels like what he deserves.

Yet, he pushes forwards. Minutes, hours, tick by as they pass by soldier after soldier, long gone before they already got there. He already got a hold of Laswell, updating her on the situation and she had told them to try to track down Ghost to see what he knows about the Shepherd situation they probably have going on. So, that's what they were doing. Maybe they could convince him to come home, though it's unlikely considering how his trust issues would certainly skyrocket after this whole experience.

"Tell me where Shepherd is," A voice echoes in the clearing. Price and Gaz exchange a look before immediately dropping behind cover, moving this way until they come across Ghost. He's covered in blood, mask smeared with red. In his clenched fist is a soldier's vest, the said man beaten black and blue as he stares up at the former lieutenant.

"Please, Lieutenant, let me go!" The man pathetically whimpers. Price looks over to the side to see another man, already dead and face down on the ground. Ghost pulls a gun out of his holster, forcing the captain's gaze to snap back to the scene in front of them.

"Tell me," Ghost grits through his teeth, pressing the gun against his temple with force, "Where Shepherd is."

"I don't know," The man sobs, "I don't know. Only the major knows."

"Major Johnson?"

The soldier nods, "Yes. Please, Ghost. I told you all I know. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry."

Price watches Ghost grip the gun tighter. He leans down into his target's face, menacingly which causes the man to flinch as another sob wracks through his body. He then barks, "Sorry doesn't bring him back."

His finger moves to the trigger and Price jumps into action, yelling out, "Simon!"

Ghost stops immediately, looking over to where the noise came from. It wasn't about saving the soldier in his grasp, it was about saving him and letting him know that they're there. Plus, any information that the

man at gunpoint may have, they need. “Laswell, you there?” He asks into his comms.

“I’m here,” She voices immediately.

“Stay on.”

Price makes his way over to the two as Ghost blinks at him. Gaz follows in toe, holstering his gun. Once the captain is standing in front on the two he states, “We need him alive for right now. Stand down.”

He knows they’re on opposing teams technically right now but he has confidence that Ghost won’t hurt them. Gaz, despite how tense he is, seems to too. He clicks back on the comm button, holding it closer to the soldier that still currently has a gun pointed at him, “Tell us everything.”

The man hesitates, looking at the mic before up at Price. He swallows. Ghost, obviously not as patient, presses the gun harder while growling, “Speak.”

He then does as told, “The major— Major Lewis Johnson— Is currently working underneath General Shepherd. He wants to finish what he started but knew you guys would catch on to him. We have orders to dismantle the kill the 141, starting with Sergeant Mactavish. I’m really sorry about him being dead please don’t hurt me.”

“Why Soap?” Price interrogates, a growl in his own voice now.

“He blew up Graves. Those guys from Las Almas are also on his hit list. What was their names?”

Gaz steps forwards then, asking, “Alejandro and Rodolfo?”

“Yes! Them!”

The anger in Price is overwhelming. They had so much bullshit to deal with after Las Almas and yet that whole time still comes back to haunt every single one of them without fail. It was the bloody gift that never stopped giving. He steps into his space, demanding, “How many people are willingly working under Shepherd? I need names.”

He starts listening off names. Price goes through a mental checklist and by the time he’s finished, he discovers that it’s almost everyone who’s body they had already stumbled upon at this point. Laswell confirms that she got the list also, saying she’s going to work on

wrapping this situation up as soon as she gets word that they're done here. So Price then asks, "Anything else?"

"No that's all I know—"

A gunshot bounces off the buildings around them as the body of the man they were just speaking to crumbles to the floor. Gaz looks down at him before up at the perpetrator, who was staring down at the man without any body of regret. Ghost holsters his gun, turning on his heel.

"We're done now Laswell," Price informs.

Her voice then says, "Copy. I recorded it all. I'll cut the last with him shooting him out and get to work. Get home safely boys."

Price chases after Ghost. He can't lose another one of his boys to this. Not with Shepherd having hits on all of them like this. "Ghost, I'm sure you can come—"

"No," Ghost cuts him off, not turning around but stopping, "Original plan still stands. I go back to Johnny and I'll have my person meet up with you. No exceptions. I can't get at Shepherd if I'm behind a jail cell for betrayal, even if it's proven now that Soap's innocent. Back when I turned, it wasn't. They won't overlook that."

"This is going to get you killed, Simon," Price says.

The man does turn to face them then, fury in his eyes as he stomps towards him. Gaz does take a step back but the captain doesn't, knowing that Ghost won't hurt him and that he's just hurting. Him saying he was going back to Johnny gave the older man hope that the former sergeant was still kicking but not by much. Ghost likes to hold onto other ghosts. "So what then, huh, Price? I have nothing left," He snaps, "My career is over. My family is dead and now Johnny... I have fucking nothing. The last thing I can do is take down the man that did this to him in the first place."

"You have us. We can work on this together."

"We *are*. If I'm out there, alone, he's going to come knocking on my door first. Not yours. It gives you plenty of time to find him while he's searching for me. He's going to know this," Ghost gestures around, "Is my doing. Right now, you are currently not my captain as much as I respect you as a man. We are doing this my way."



Price yells back, “You think this is what Soap would want? For you to blow up and destroy yourself in his death? Is he dead, Simon?”

Ghost visibly slacks, anger still burning in his eyes despite it. He clenches his fist then unclenches them, looking away from the captain. All hope squashes in Price like a bug under a shoe. “When I left him, yes.”

Grief is back in full swing, causing him to stagger a little. He swallows it down to keep face at the moment, still having a job to do. Gaz then asks, “When you left him... Is the surgeon with him?”

“Yes.”

“Ghost you have to let us come see him. Please. If he’s gone, he deserves a proper burial and his family deserves to have a funeral. You have to let us take him at that point. If he’s still here, we do as you ask,” The sergeant bargains, taking control, “We’re probably all going to be placed in safe houses anyways while the base is taken apart and reset after this mess. It wouldn’t be safe for us to let Shepherd know Soap’s alive anyways since Laswell is probably letting everyone know that he’s KIA. But if he’s gone then you come with us. Can we agree on that?”

Ghost thinks for a moment, eyeing up suspiciously Gaz as he does so. He then gestures his head for them to follow before walking off. Price takes a deep breath.

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Ghost knew they were right. If Johnny is dead, his family deserves to bury him and have a memorial service. Part of him feels as if he should’ve maybe waited until after he knew he was going to make it before going on his revenge spree but the other part knows that he would’ve missed his window to figure out all of this if he had. He feels exhausted. All the time they had spent running was catching up to him and with the added weight of not knowing if Johnny was actually? It was a lot.

He makes his way up to the house, inhaling as he looks at the door. Price claps a hand on his shoulder and immediately all the anger that passed between them had faded. He pauses for a moment. Then, opens the gate and makes his way up the steps to the entrance. He opens the door, immediately greeted by Jackson.

“Oh thank God,” Jackson exclaims, “He made it.”

Ghost feels all of that weight off his shoulders as Jackson then takes in his appearance, eyes going wide as he does so. He doesn't care. He rushes into the dining room, seeing Annabelle helping Johnny drink some water. He's still pale and shaky but he's alive. At his entrance, Johnny looks over, croaking "Ghost... What the hell hap—"

Ghost cuts him off by wrapping him in a bit crushing hug. Annabelle starts fussing over the newly put in stitches but it all goes away as he feels the Scot chuckle in his arms followed by reciprocation of the hug. "Alright," He says, burying his head into his neck, "You big softy."

Price and Gaz make their way around the corner slowly. This causes Soap to immediately pull away, jumping off the table and grabbing his gun as he looks at Ghost in complete hurt. The distrust pangs in all three men's chest. "Stitches!" Annabelle scolds.

"No! No, no, no! Son," Price says holding out his hands, "It's alright. We're not here to finish the job or anything. Bloody hell! We just wanted to make sure you were okay and still kicking."

Soap lowers the gun, seeming embarrassed by the outburst as he hobbles his way back over to Ghost. The taller man reaches his arm out and pulls Soap close to help support his weight. Also for the fact that now that he knows he's okay, he'll never let him go but that's besides the point. He takes the gun, holstering it.

"So," Johnny looks around, "We're all good?"

"We're all good as long as you don't try to shoot us again, mate," Gaz jokes, "Your name is practically cleared. We're just waiting on Laswell to fix the mess that Shepherd made. Though, he's still on the run somewhere."

And with that, the blue eyed man looks as if he could cry. It's a huge victory for them. "So can we come home?" He asks, hopefully. Price and Gaz look at Ghost who now positions himself to stand in front of Soap.

"No," Ghost informs, "Not yet. Shepherd thinks you're dead and we want to keep it that way for as long as we can."

Soap's eyes widen as he questions, "Who else thinks I'm dead?"

"Everyone not in this room."

“Does that mean they’re going to inform my family?”

There’s a panicked look in his eye, obviously worried for his family back in Scotland. Price steps forwards then, standing next to Ghost. “No,” He comforts, “We’re going to go back to base and explain everything. They won’t inform your family or legally declare you KIA but we will tell them that we want Shepherd to think you are.”

“How will we know who to trust?” Soap asks.

“We won’t. We just have to hope for the best.”

Ghost then adds, “Unless you want that whole legal drama of being declared alive again?”

Johnny shakes his head at that. He sighs, tension leaving his shoulders afterwards. Ghost can’t help but stare at him, just grateful to see those little actions from him that make him alive. Simon slowly starts to crawl his way out again. “Alright,” Soap nods, face turning serious, “What’s next?”

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Price and Gaz leave. They give Johnny one last hug as they do so, telling him they’ll be in touch with updates. Ghost ends up giving them the coordinates to the safe house they’re going to, hoping to not involve poor Annabelle in anymore of this bullshit. She’s done enough. He would only do that if they were still on the run and had no choice. Plus upon seeing the team together a bit, his trust issues simmered down. It’s not yet over. They still have a lot of work to do but for now it is.

He thanks Annabelle profusely. She stares at him, pulling him off to the side as she says, “So that’s Johnny, huh?”

“Yes,” Ghost sighs, “That’s Johnny.”

“Glad I was able to bring him back to you.”

“Thanks again for that.”

“Don’t,” She smiles, “That’s what friends are for.”

She punches his shoulder before grabbing Jackson’s arm and leaving. Ghost stands there for a moment, watching them go in complete shock at the label of friends. Though, that’s what they are, he guesses. He

ticks the two of them onto his mental note of people to trust, still weary of Jackson despite being happy for the two of them.

“So,” Johnny sighs behind him, “On the road again?”

He turns to face him, taking in his entire being. Ghost shuffles forwards in an attempt to hug him again but Soap stops him, reaching up and slowly taking off the mask. He grins, tiredly, as he greets, “Hi, Simon.”

“Hi, Johnny.”

Johnny presses their foreheads together again before wrapping them up in another hug. Simon finally breathes. His senses and his brain is just full of the man in his arms as he closes his eyes. “How many people did you kill?” Johnny asks.

He chooses to stay silent.

## End Notes

Come hangout on tiktok (@mxrkies.edits)  
Or tumblr (@gaylittleeddie)

If you make any art of this fic I swear to god you better tag me  
this is a threat /lh

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